

# GREATER TAMPA BAY BLUE STAR MOTHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



August 2019

## It's The Annual National Blue Star Mothers Convention and GTB is Well Represented

By Nikki Smith: The 77th Annual Convention of Blue Star Mothers of America Inc. convened in Bloomington, MN on Wednesday 31 July with 197 registered including 71 first time convention attendees including our own Nikki Smith and Mimi Leroy-Marler. Five members of the Minnesota Veterans Native American Color Guard were part of opening ceremonies. Minnesota Blue Star Mothers served as Ambassadors answering questions, providing directions, moving boxes and making all feel welcome in their home state. They also went above and beyond in garnering sponsors to underwrite box lunches, school buses that took us to Fort Snelling and Target Field, tickets for great seats at the ballpark and more.

In addition to the important business, including elections, that was conducted at the convention there were two off site events. The annual memorial service was held at the Fort Snelling Chapel, a designated National Historic Landmark. Video from the moving service can be seen on BSMA's Facebook page. The official photograph of the convention was taken outside the chapel and is featured on the Home Page of BSMA's web page. Outside the chapel was the traveling Spirit of Minnesota Tribute Bell which contains donated military medals, coins and dog tags from across the state.

It was a perfect night for the Twins v Royals ball game where the jumbotron read Welcome Military Moms Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.!!!! More than 100 Blue Star Moms sporting their Friday Red Shirts were treated to a high scoring game with the hometown team prevailing. With a delegation of Blue Star Mothers on the field, the National Anthem was sung by a Minnesotan Mom.

See photos and live fed videos of the business meetings and other events on BSMA's Facebook page. Also visit Ocala's Facebook page for a variety of photos. Be sure to "like" both pages.

Our chapter was honored to have Nikki and Mimi as delegates to this year's convention. Theme of the Big Dipper Fundraiser was League of Our Own. The Baseball girls photo was Inspired by the All-American Girls Professional League, the theme for this year's Big Dipper FunD Night was a "League of OUR Own". Special Guest was Sister Toni Ann Palermo PhD who played short stop for the Chicago Colleen's & Springfield Sallies in 1949 & 1950. She was part of the only Girls Team to ever play in famed Yankee Stadium with the added bonus of having the Yankees watching from the dugout. At the Closing Banquet, Sister Toni offered her replica Sallies' uniform complete with shiny green underpants for a live auction which fetched more than \$700. Thanks to Sister Toni's generosity and that of two food sponsors, the Crown Plaza Hotel which did not charge of use of the pool area and the donors of items for the silent auction, more than \$12,000 was raised for the Josephine Calenda Educational Assistance Fund. Look for the "Baseball Girls" photo in our montage—Mimi FL3 Sister Toni Nikki FL3 Karen Ferris-Fearnside FL4.



## GTBBSM AT NATIONAL CONVENTION CON'T)



### MISSION ADOPT A RECRUIT

At our Blue Star Mothers meeting we were told several stories about “abandoned” recruits. They had no one to write to them at boot camp, be there for graduation or share that huge moment of accomplishment and pride. We all agreed to reach out to recruiters and begin the process nationally as well as creating an adopt a recruit program. As we gear up for this Mission, anyone that wants to join us, please send an email to [FL3BSM@gmail.com](mailto:FL3BSM@gmail.com) and we’ll let you know as more information becomes available.

## INAUGURAL VAVS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD WON BY OUR OWN NIKKI SMITH!

As one of her goals for her presidency, outgoing President Anne Parker created the Outstanding VAVS Volunteer of the Year Award to honor the VAVS (VA Volunteer Service) Volunteer who has gone above and beyond in performing the duties laid out for the position by National and whose heart is reflected in the energy taken to perform the position. We are so very thrilled and honored for our own Nikki Smith to be the very first honoree. Members at FL3 know how hard Nikki works in this position and we are so very proud and excited that she has been recognized by National leadership for her efforts. Congratulations Nikki—well done! Nikki brings a \$150 dollar check back to our chapter for charitable/chapter use and we look forward to hearing her proposals and suggestions.



### BARBARA'S CORNER

What a great convention! Congratulations Nikki on an award well deserved! I had the opportunity to view many of the Facebook Live presentations and came away with many ideas and thoughts for our chapter. I hope more of us can attend conventions in the future and we are hoping for one "closer to home" next year. Our chapter is growing in leaps and bounds and all the new energy and excitement is contagious and uplifting. In the coming months we will be adding more social opportunities, fundraising opportunities and events and expanding our donor partners. We have a new website coming online soon and as of the September meeting, we are happy to announce there will be dial in capability so you won't have to miss the meeting if you are out of town or unable to attend. Please look for the meeting notice Cindy Thomas, our new Secretary, will be sending with agenda and dial in information. We want your feedback, suggestions, and ideas. We are always—Military Strong and Stronger Together!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!

Extending a warm welcome to our newest members:

Marie Shively—Army (son)

Hilary Warnock—Army (son)

Dewaena Lee—Army (son)

Jennifer Triana—Navy (son)

Doris McCue—Army (son)

Karen Moody—Army (daughter)

Please be sure to look for our new members at our next meeting and welcome them all!

## Giving Hope to the Homeless

Our vision is to locate and identify homeless Veterans and non-Veterans to aid in finding emergency shelter and assist in providing the necessities to improve their quality of life. Tampa Homeless Outreach will offer direction and guidance to these individuals in navigating the resources available in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties; assisting them in reaching the goal of permanent and affordable housing.

Join us for a black tie or blue jean evening of dining, dancing and camaraderie to allow Tampa Homeless Outreach to help many more homeless men, women and families.

Tickets are \$50 pp and available on line only at:  
<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/tampahomelessoutreach1>



## Our New 2019-2020 Officers for Greater Tampa Bay Blue Star Mothers

President - Barbara McGreal

VP1 - Donna Kistal

VP2 - Mimi Leroy-Marler

VP3 - Jennifer Hochberg

VP4 - Nancy Harkins

Recording Secretary - Cindy Thomas

Financial Secretary - Lea Ann Reynolds

Treasurer - Francine LeVine

Membership Chair - Nancy Harkins

Chaplain - Mimi Leroy-Marler

Patriotic Instructor - Tanya Mort

VAWS Tampa - Nikki Smith

VAWS Pinellas - Jackie June

Blue to Gold Liaison - Donna Kistel

Historian - Open

Public Relations - Cindy Thomas

Facebook Auction Senior Administrator - Melissa Matos

Social Committee Chair - Cindy Thomas

Fundraising Committee Chair - Cindy Thomas

## A Call To Action

Many of you expressed an interest in joining a committee, fundraising, becoming more involved. **WE NEED YOU!** The social committee (plans quarterly social get togethers around our area) is looking for suggestions and members. Our fundraising committee is getting off the ground with some really exciting upcoming events and more. We are also looking for a Welcoming Committee chair and volunteers to be battle buddies to welcome and become a battle buddy to incoming new members. We have many upcoming events, ideas and opportunities and we need you. Contact Cindy Thomas at [cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com](mailto:cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com) if interested

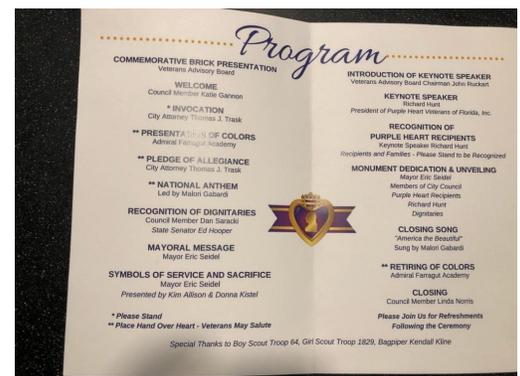
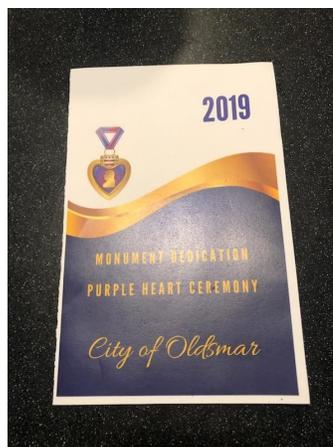
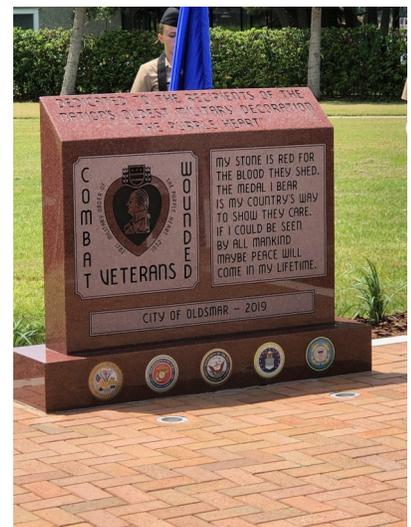
# Symbols of Service

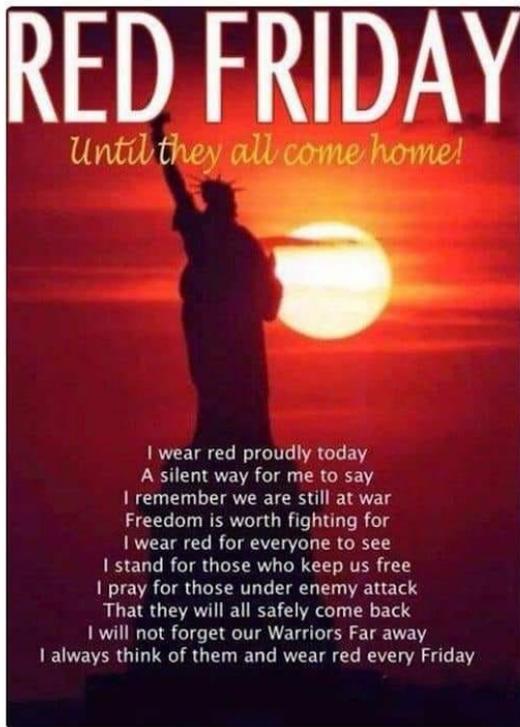
Donna Kistel, our Blue to Gold Liaison recently attended a monument dedication and shared some poignant pictures of the day. She also was gracious enough to share her presentation which offers a wealth of information and is shared at Fields of Honor and Blue to Gold Ceremonies. Thank you, Donna, for the important work you do on our Chapter's behalf and on behalf of all our Gold Star Families and thank you for sharing the following with us:

## 2019 Symbols of Service and Sacrifice

The Blue Star Service Flag began being used in WWI as an unofficial symbol that a son or daughter was serving in the military. During WWII, it was officially adopted by the Dept. of Defense to indicate that an immediate family member was serving in the Armed Forces during a period of war or hostilities in which the United States is involved. To this day, it can be seen proudly displayed, usually in the front window of the home, by family members who have a loved one currently serving in our military.

The Blue Star service flag contains a Blue Star that signifies loyalty, honor, and duty. The red border represents the blood given by many warriors in defense of our country, freedom, and human dignity at home and on foreign soil. The field of white stands for the purity of spirit, and the price of peace that only a warrior can truly know. When a brave warrior is wounded in action, this hero's service flag contains a silver star. The Silver Star flag honors service personnel who displayed exceptional valor while engaged in military combat operations against an enemy force. Historically, when a warrior gives his last full measure of devotion in the defense of this nation, the star on his blue star service flag is covered with a Gold Star. The Gold Star represents courage and the supreme sacrifice given to the cause of liberty and freedom. The Family of a Fallen service member will often place this Gold Star flag in the front window of their home as a sign of honor and remembrance. This service flag is also presented to the families of those active duty service members who died while serving our nation. Another symbol of service is the "Blue Star Service Lapel Pin", which is a replica of the Blue Star Service Flag; it identifies the immediate family members of those serving in our Armed Forces during these times of official conflict. The Gold Star Lapel Pin is issued by the Department of Defense to families whose loved ones died in combat theater. The Next of Kin Pin is also issued by the Department of Defense to the families of those service members who died from a non-combat injury such as an illness, training accident, suicide, or car accident while on active duty. A Gold Star family can be identified by the Gold Star Lapel Pin or the Next of Kin Pin that they proudly wear near their hearts. A Blue Star family is the family of an active duty or honorably discharged member of the United States military, and includes veterans. A Silver Star family is the family of a wounded service member. A Gold Star family is the family of a fallen US service member who died in combat theater or from a service-related death, illness, suicide, or accident while on active duty.





## Medal of Honor Convention Tampa

October 22-26, 2019

Greater Tampa Bay Blue Star Mothers will be participating in this week long important national event. Please let Barbara McGreal know if your would like to volunteer. More information will be forthcoming.

# Greater Tampa Bay Blue Star Mothers



DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2019

TIME: 4 P.M.

LOCATION: 18311 ELMHURST LANE,  
TAMPA, FL 33647

PRESENTATION BY: BARBARA MCGREAL,  
PRESIDENT

*You are cordially invited to join the Greater Tampa Bay Blue Star Mothers for our Fall New Member/Prospective Member Happy Hour. Blue Star Mothers are a congressionally sanctioned organization with no religious or political party affiliation which provides support to our military community, soldiers, our Gold Star Sisters and each other. Membership is open to all Mothers and Stepmothers of currently serving members or honorably discharged members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard and National Guard. We are active volunteers for many organizations and raise funds for many more. We are social, supportive and community active. We welcome new and prospective members to our growing membership. Associate Membership is open to spouses, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or friends of the above.*

Please RSVP to Cindy Thomas at (813) 215-2208 or [cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com](mailto:cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com). Please let us know if you need additional information, have any questions. We hope to see you there

## Calling All Crafters and More!

Melissa Matos will be administrating a new GTB BSM Auction Page offering handcrafted and unique military items for bid via a closed Facebook Auction page. If you love crafting, have unique items or are looking to acquire some special Christmas gifts or items for your own collections, please look for Melissa's announcement! All funds raised will be for pre-selected designated local military charities. We also are exploring a Holiday Craft Fair and Flea Market with possible Wine Tasting so gather those treasures and look for more information at our September Meeting. Tentative date is late November, early December.

## Is Being Someone's Angel On Your "Things I Want To Do" List?

Honor Flight of Central FL is looking for volunteer guardians, more info can be found here & give website. <http://www.honorflightwcf.org/guardian-application/>

Honor Flight of West Central Florida is looking for volunteer guardians for upcoming fall flights. ☐

"Are you looking for the experience of a lifetime? Would you like to make a Veteran's dream come true to see the memorials built in his/her honor?"

We are in need of guardians for our fall flights- Mission 39 Sep 10 and Mission 40 Oct 22. This is a special honor and essential to the success of each Mission.

Guardians MUST be between 18 and 70 years of age and CANNOT be the spouse/ significant other of the Veteran. Cost is \$400 (airline, bus, meals etc).

If you would like to be a guardian, accompany a Veteran to Washington, D.C. and share in this meaningful day, please submit a guardian application ASAP.

Thank you for continued support not only to fly our Veterans, but to change lives."

[http://www.honorflightwcf.org/guardian-application/?fbclid=IwAR2s02xFLj-filqnrFwWJQeoaGqYmpnyqO2G0M\\_jxFTCiQNd2dnpzuGhoc](http://www.honorflightwcf.org/guardian-application/?fbclid=IwAR2s02xFLj-filqnrFwWJQeoaGqYmpnyqO2G0M_jxFTCiQNd2dnpzuGhoc)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

September 11—Patriot's Day, Veteran's Memorial Park 0900

September 4 - BSM Meeting, American Legion Post 5. 6 pm social 6:30 pm meeting.

September 21—New Member/Prospective Member Happy Hour- - Cindy Thomas' house (please see previous page invite to RSVP)

September 29—Gold Star Family Appreciation at MacDill AFB

October 2—BSM Meeting, American Legion Post 5. 6 pm social meeting 6:30 pm

October 12—Field of Honor—Blue and Gold Ceremony—Cimino Family 1000

October 19—Gold Star Mothers Appreciation Lunch (tentative location Tampa Palms Country Club—club is open on Saturday for lunch so moving date to requested date at meeting of October 19 pending vote)

October 22-25—Medal of Honor Tampa Bay Convention - Details and Volunteer Opportunities coming soon

November 4 —Goodie Bags for Yolando Mercados Veterans Day Meal

November 11—Veterans Day Parade and Happy Hour Social Following (details TBD pending verification from Haley)

November 17—Deployed Troops Holiday Packing 11:30 am meeting following at 1 pm after packing is complete

December—Athena House Christmas Party - location and date TBD

December 4—BSM Meeting and Holiday Party 6 pm

December 7—Pearl Harbor/WWII Memorial 1000

December 14—Wreaths Across America—various locations. Details coming soon

December 21—City of Safety Harbor Christmas Parade

January—new socials and volunteer opportunities coming in 2020!

**Don't Forget To Follow Us On  
Facebook by Liking Greater  
Tampa Bay Blue Star  
Mothers And Keep On Top Of  
What's Happening!**