

# GREATER TAMPA BAY BLUE STAR MOTHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



September 2019

## Our Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) Participation is Expanding to Include Bay Pines

As many of you know, our chapter is voracious in its support of James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa. This outreach effort has long been spearheaded by VAVS representative, Nikki Smith. During our July meeting a suggestion was brought forward to lend the same support to Bay Pines Veterans Hospital in Pinellas County and with many thanks to Jackie June for stepping forward, we now have added the Bay Pines system as part of our VAVS support.

Jackie has volunteered and gone through training and is now our VAVS representative to Bay Pines. Jackie will also be a member of the VAVS board. Nikki and Jackie will back each other up as needed to cover meetings and navigate fundraisers and solicitations.

Nikki Smith, VAVS Rep to James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, was honored to present a \$425 check on behalf of National Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. to Nate Witt, Chief of Voluntary Services at Bay Pines VA Health System. The donation is designated for Women's Health and is part of Immediate Past President Anne Parker's National President's Project. (photo right)

As part of the ongoing effort to support VAVS, Nikki will be collecting books for the annual book sale in October. If you have any books to donate for the sale, please contact Nikki via email. Nikki tells us "best sellers" are Military and History books, fiction and non-fiction and current or recent best sellers. Hardcover books are more desirable than paperback. Please make sure books are in good to excellent condition and free of markings, tears and have covers intact.

Jackie is also running a toiletry drive for Bay Pines. Bay Pines has requested full sizes of Mouthwash, Shampoo, Body Wash, Toothpaste and toothbrushes as well as Shaving Cream and Razors. If you have other toiletry items and are unsure if they would be welcome, please contact Jackie.

As we move into the holiday season, suggestions have been made to create individual gift bags for patients of Hayley and the Nursing Care Center for Veterans. We will be making decisions on this at our next meeting and fleshing out requests.

Thank you Jackie and Nikki for serving as our VAVS representatives and to all who have donated and continue to donate to our veterans and soldiers under care.



# ON THE HORIZON

## MISSION ADOPT A RECRUIT

We haven't forgotten this new program. Now that the convention has passed, we will continue to work with Anne Parker of the Ocala Club and others to flesh out and up this new program in early 2020 hopefully. The adopt a recruit will be primarily letter writing and support during boot camp and we will be working with recruiters from Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines to ensure recruits receive encouragement and support during the boot camp phase. More information will be forthcoming in

## NEW EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES WITH OUR NEW PARTNER, TURNER-BRANDON POST 7 CLEARWATER

We have reached out to a majority of American Legion Posts in our area of operation and have received an enthusiastic reply from Commander Robert Farrell (or "Bingo Bob" as he tells me he likes to be called). Bob and his wife Josie have undertaken a robust effort to increase membership and participation in the post. To that end, they have invited us to join them every Friday and Saturday night for Honors Dances, many with a live band. The cost is modest at \$8 per person. The post also has Karaoke night, Bingo and host of other activities we have been invited to join in on. We will also be discussing a wonderful opportunity Bob has offered us to participate in a Dining In for a returning Reserve Unit and their families December 6th. The Post is serving a buffet dinner and providing a live band in their lounge area. He has offered us a table to let attendees know about Blue Star Mothers alongside his tables for the American Legion, Sons of the Legion and the Auxiliary. Post 7 is carrying all the costs of the Dining In. Bob is probably one of the most generous and enthusiastic people I've ever had the pleasure of speaking with. He has also offered us use of the Post's 250 person banquet space and 150 person lounge to us for upcoming events free of charge (availability to be coordinated with events already scheduled). We will be discussing all of this at our October meeting, but I invite you to check out their Facebook page (Turner Brandon American Legion Post 7) or their website <http://www.alpost7clwr.org/> for more information on events and happenings.

## AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY UNIT 273 FASHION SHOW

Rhonda is giving us notice for our calendars ladies—so mark those 2020 calendars with a fun event in March. The annual Fashion Show this coming year will be held on Saturday March 7th at the Salt Rock Grill. They have used different boutiques in the past, but last year they went with Stein Mart, and they were great so we may see a repeat. We will also be looking into doing a Fashion Show Fundraiser in 2020 and a suggestion has been made for Charity Closet. Rhonda has given us some great incite into how to do a successful fashion show fundraiser and we truly appreciate it. If you have suggestions on locations, logistics or think you might want to be part of this event—please let Cindy Thomas know.

## USO HOLIDAY GIFT WRAP FUNDRAISER AT WESTSHORE PLAZA MALL/OPERATION STUFF A STOCKING

From Dec 1-Dec 24th, the USO will be looking for volunteers to help with gift wrapping. There are usually 3-shifts to pick from and they are located somewhere in the West Shore Plaza Mall. With all the holiday events and manning the Center the USO volunteers themselves are pretty stretched out, so they be looking for organizations to fill in when needed. It will be rolled out about mid November, so please keep it in mind. More information will be forthcoming in our November meeting and Newsletter. Also on the USO side, every year they have Operation "Stuff a Stocking" Program, filling a wish list of over 800 military children, probably more this year. They will be asking many organizations and members to take a wish list and buy a minimum of \$50 per child, this program will also roll on near the first of November

## BE A MILITARY MENTOR

Rhonda also wanted to let you know about this program that she thinks everyone and anyone can do, or may want to do it. This is super easy and done from your home for our military spouses.

Here's how it works:

Log into [www.ementorprogram.org](http://www.ementorprogram.org)

1. Select Veteran & Military Spouses
2. Fill out the questionnaire
3. Where it says "*I am a member of/affiliated with*" find **Blue Star Mothers**, and any others that may apply. Oh by the way, she asked them why they didn't have Blue Star Mothers in the drop down selection, since then they have added it.
4. The last item is "More About Me" In this area you would give a little more detail about your life experiences and anything else you think would relate to a spouse.

The numbers are growing, now at 708 spouses waiting for a little encouragement. You can either wait for a spouse to contact you, or you can contact them, Rhonda tells me she never waits and always contact them but it's a personal choice. If you have questions or want to more about it—Let Rhonda know. Even if you've never been a military spouse yourself, remember everyone could use "a mom who understands".



### BARBARA'S CORNER

What a month! Even though we didn't have a "major event" this month, we have so much going on! Be sure you check the On The Horizon section for some new opportunities to volunteer with cooperative organizations and some really fun events if you're just looking for something to do. Our members have been busy planning, gathering and reaching out to our military community. Our calendar is a great place to start to check out upcoming events and opportunities to participate. We are making new connections not only with American Legion Posts in our area of operation, but also expanding our corporate and private donors. Be sure to see the new sponsorship opportunities in the newsletter. We also have a new auction site just about ready to launch. More details will follow at our October meeting. But most importantly to me is our growth in membership. We are reaching out and connecting with more and more Blue Star Mothers. Thank you Cindy Thomas for a fun Happy Hour where we got to know new members Doris McCue and Jen Triana better. We also are pleased to welcome Carolyn Frakes (Andrew—Active Duty Army) and Wendy Leahy (Samantha—Active Duty Army) to our midst. Keep a lookout for our next New Member/Prospective Member Event in first quarter 2020. Thank you Francine LeVine for offering your South Tampa Home as our next venue. Finally—be sure to check out our Holiday Fundraiser with Lynch Creek Farms. The fresh offerings are amazing and our club receives 15% from all sales back to us to continue our support of our military community.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!

Extending a warm welcome to our newest members:

Carolyn Frakes—Army (son)

Wendy Leahy—Army (daughter)

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

## Gold Star Mothers Brunch

This year we will be doing something a little different. We will be holding our event on Sunday October, 20th at the Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club in New Tampa, north of the city near the Wesley Chapel/Pasco line with easy access on and off I-75 via Bruce B. Downes Blvd. The brunch is buffet style featuring made to order omelets by Ms. Delores a TPCC treasure, a selection of breakfast meats, oatmeal, pastries, fresh fruit, Belgian waffles and breakfast potatoes. A full bar is available for those must have Mimosas and Bloody Marys and more. Coffee and non-alcoholic drinks are also available. After Brunch we will be participating in a 15 minute Chair Yoga Session led by Lisa Blair, a certified Yoga instructor with a Military specialty. Lisa will then lead us in a 10 minute Mindful Meditation session. Dress is attire suitable for brunch. No jeans or tee shirts please. No need for yoga workout clothes as we will be comfortably seated during the exercises. TPCC is a Clubcorp property and has strong connections to the Military Community with many retired veterans as members and many active duty, reserve and veteran families members as well. Be sure to check out their Military Wall Of Honor. If you have any questions, or would like to register to attend—please let Cindy Thomas know at [cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com](mailto:cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com)

## 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>



## 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



## September Member Profile

### Francine LeVine, Treasurer

Francine is our new Treasurer. She is also mom to Veronica, an active duty Marine. If Francine and Veronica sound familiar to you, it's because Veronica was featured in the 2019 card deck for Military Appreciation Night at the Tampa Bay Threshers and Francine was on the field and presented as her card deck representative!

Francine's dad was a World War II Army medic and her husband's grandfather was an Army Doctor. No, Veronica isn't in military medicine, but the family does have a strong history.

Francine enjoys cooking and reading and spends her time when not participating in Blue Star Mother events and board activities volunteering for her synagogue and her synagogue's sisterhood (women's organization). She also volunteers at Ronald McDonald House and is a bookkeeper for her husband's law practice.

Francine joined GTBBSM in hopes of gaining a better understanding of military service and as a way to give back and be involved and connected with her daughter's work and commitment.

Francine would like to see us add more speaker opportunities and military education to our meetings. Great suggestion Francine!

We want to thank Francine for jumping "on-board" as Treasurer. Please look for Francine at meetings and events and be sure to say hello!



## Tiered Sponsorship Opportunities

We are please to roll out the following Tiered Sponsorship Opportunities to support our charities and events in support of our Military and Veteran community

We offer the following Affordable and Tax-Deductible Tiered Sponsorship Opportunities to help us support our Mission:

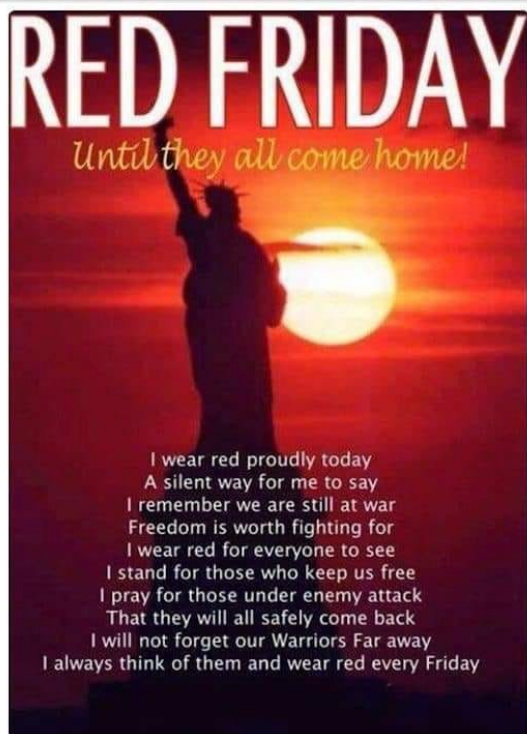
**Platinum** – Gifts over \$250 (monetary or in-kind). Platinum donors will be profiled in our newsletter, a FB post and will be on signage for major events. Event sponsors will be listed on signage separately and listed on our website and re-curring newsletter thank you to our donors' block along with a Business Card sized ad.

**Gold** – Gifts from \$100-\$249 (monetary or in-kind). Gold donors will be profiled in our newsletter and listed on all sign-age for major events as well as listed in the newsletters and website as detailed above

**Silver** – Gifts from \$50-\$99 (monetary or in-kind). Silver donors will get a business card ad in our newsletter if desired and be listed in the newsletter and website as detailed above

**Bronze** – Gifts from \$25-\$49. Bronze donors will be listed in our newsletter and website.

If you know of anyone, corporate or donor, who would like to participate in our sponsorship program—please contact Cindy Thomas at [cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com](mailto:cindythomas@cindyjthomas.com) for a promotion letter or to provide contact information for a promo-tion letter to be sent.



## **Membership**

### **Renewal Time!**

**Membership renewal is due  
NOW! . Please be sure to renew  
your**

**Blue Star Mothers membership  
online at**

**[https://  
www.bluestarmothers.org/](https://www.bluestarmothers.org/)**

## **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.



SHOP **LYNCH CREEK FARMS** AND OUR FUNDRAISER WILL EARN CASH BACK FOR EVERY PURCHASE! 100% OF WHAT WE RAISE GOES DIRECTLY TO SUPPORT OUR MILITARY, OUR VETERAN'S, AND OUR GOLD STAR FAMILIES.



<https://www.lynchcreekfundraising.com/c/199695>

**About Lynch Creek Farms.** Located in the small town of Shelton, Washington. We are on the West side of the Puget Sound, surrounded by the great, pristine forests of the Pacific Northwest. The address for the main office and warehouse for Lynch Creek Farm is 130 E Export Rd., Shelton, WA 98584. It is because we sustainably procure our evergreen boughs from the forests all around us that we are able to deliver the freshest wreaths, centerpieces, mini-trees, and garland directly to your front door.

**Greater Tampa Bay Blue Star Mothers** are a non-partisan, non-political, non-sectarian, non-discriminatory, and non-profit organization. Our mission is to support through service our members, our sons and daughters who serve or have served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, all United States military personnel who serve or have served honorably and their families, Veterans' organizations, causes that will benefit military personnel, and our Gold Star Families.

## 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 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\\_jxFTCiQN2dnpzuGhoc](http://www.honorflightwcf.org/guardian-application/?fbclid=IwAR2s02xFLj-filqnrFwWJQeoaGqYmpnyqO2G0M_jxFTCiQN2dnpzuGhoc)





## UPCOMING EVENTS

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 20—Gold Star Mothers Appreciation Brunch Tampa Palms Country Club. Cost is \$13 and includes Brunch, Chair Yoga Session and Mindful Meditation Session.

October 22-25—Medal of Honor Tampa Bay Convention

November 4 —Goodie Bags for Yolando Mercados Veterans Day Meal

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 6—Dining In Brandon Turner Post 7 Clearwater—details at October meeting

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!**