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# TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

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## 2021 IMPACT REPORT





**TAPS**  
*Families of America's  
Fallen Heroes*  
**@teams4taps**

†  
JAMES  
LEE  
CLARK  
LT COL  
US AIR FORCE  
IRAQ  
DEC 13 1955  
JUL 3 2016  
OKLAHOMA  
BELOVED FATHER  
GRANDPA

†  
ALEXANDER  
JACOB  
ANTON  
CAPT  
US AIR FORCE  
DEC 6 1984  
JUL 3 2016  
OKLAHOMA  
VALIANT HEART  
ETERNALLY LOVED

†  
GEORGE  
WILLIAM  
RAYSON  
CAPT  
ARMY  
JAN 16 1941  
BIRONZE STAR





## Life as Living Legacies

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is America's national nonprofit organization caring for the families of America's fallen heroes. We are proud to present our 2021 Impact Report, sharing our mission and the ways it has brought hope and healing to surviving military families.

The foundation of our organization is peer based emotional support - survivors helping survivors heal. We train and employ peer professionals to ensure all military survivors are connected with a national community to honor and remember the lives and legacies of their loved ones, regardless of how or where the death occurred, the duty status of the deceased, or the relationship of the survivor grieving the loss. TAPS honors all who have served and died by caring for everyone who now grieves their passing.

For more than 27 years, TAPS has this provided much-needed comprehensive care for all individuals searching for ways to cope with their profound grief and trauma complicated by military service and the secondary loss of the military community. TAPS is a recognized subject matter expert in educating military leadership and mental health professionals who support grieving military survivors and training peer professionals to provide free and unlimited love, compassion, care, and comfort.

With a heavy heart and pride in our mission, we welcomed **9,246** newly bereaved families for care and comfort. This averages to **25** new survivors coming to TAPS seeking resources and support each day in 2021. TAPS was immediately connected with **41%** of all new 2021 survivors within the first month of their loss. We raised **\$16M** to support our mission and care for the nearly **100,000** military survivors in need of compassionate care. In 2021, TAPS held over **930** events that welcomed and supported more than **15,000** participants, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We have answered over **15,700** calls to our 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline, resolved over **6,459** casework challenges, and connected military survivors with over **\$241** million dollars in education benefits. TAPS has shared its expertise, conducting more than **71** training programs on grief, trauma, and suicide postvention for men, women, and families nationwide and worldwide reaching over **8,300** live individuals. As the national organization providing free and unlimited comprehensive bereavement programs and services to military survivors, now more than ever, the families of America's fallen heroes need our support.

One by one, broken hearts connect to a healing place with TAPS. With the generous support of our donors and the tireless efforts of our volunteers, we can heal these hearts. We hope that you will join us in 2022 to bear witness to the incredible healing that takes place within our community. While we are grateful to be the leading organization, our work is not done. There are hundreds of thousands of military survivors around the country living in isolation and grief. With your continued support, we will not stop until we have connected with every one of them to reassure them they are never alone.

Very gratefully,

Bonnie Carroll

2021

# TAPS YEAR IN REVIEW



TAPS IS HERE

24/7

FOR ALL WHO GRIEVE THE DEATH OF A MILITARY

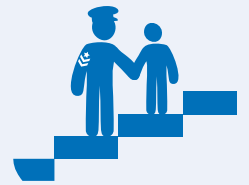
*loved one*

135,718+  
*Survivors*

CONNECTED WITH TAPS FOR COMFORT, CARE, AND RESOURCES

700+

MILITARY MENTORS VOLUNTEERED



25,200+

HOURS SUPPORTING THE TAPS MISSION

29%

OF ALL NEW TAPS SURVIVORS ARE GRIEVING THE DEATH OF THEIR PARENT



SURVIVORS GRIEVING THE DEATH OF THEIR MILITARY LOVED ONE ATTENDED A TAPS EVENT



15,766+

CALLS TO THE 24/7 HELPLINE



9,246

NEW MILITARY SURVIVORS CONNECTED WITH TAPS IN 2021



VALUE OF EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS CONNECTED WITH MILITARY SURVIVORS



WORTH OF RETROACTIVE BENEFITS SECURED FOR MILITARY SURVIVORS

*each day* 25 NEW SURVIVORS CONNECT WITH TAPS





## SURVIVOR SERVICES

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### WHY TAPS?

Why is it important to connect all those grieving the death of a military loved one with 24/7 free peer-based emotional support?

To assess how military survivors grow with grief following the deaths of their military loved ones, TAPS distributes a survey using the Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES) to those newly connecting with TAPS and engaged with TAPS Survivor Care Team members. From 201 responses, TAPS survivors face challenges understanding their loss and struggle to find purpose in the world. Among all responses, 70% reported they struggle to integrate the reality of their loss into their daily lives. These results indicate that military survivors are at risk for failing to achieve a healthy 'new normal' without support to treat trauma and process grief emotions. Future initiatives within TAPS will include a longitudinal analysis on survivors ISLES outcomes after long-term engagement and support from TAPS.

### AGE OF NEW SURVIVORS CONNECTING WITH TAPS IN 2021



**79% ADULTS**



**21% CHILDREN**  
UNDER THE AGE OF 18

### RELATIONSHIP TO MILITARY LOVED ONES AMONG NEW SURVIVORS CONNECTING WITH TAPS IN 2021



**19% PARENTS**



**29% CHILDREN**



**22% PARTNERS**

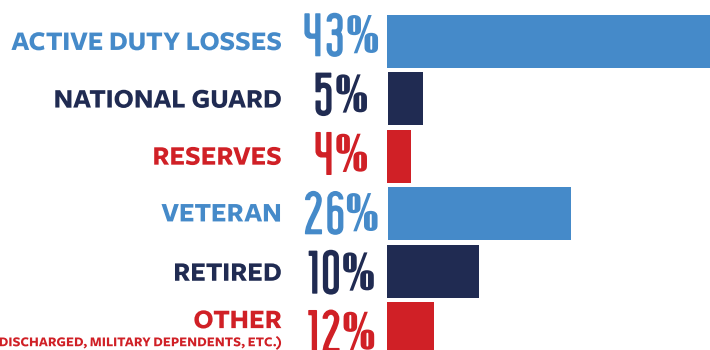


**10% SIBLINGS**

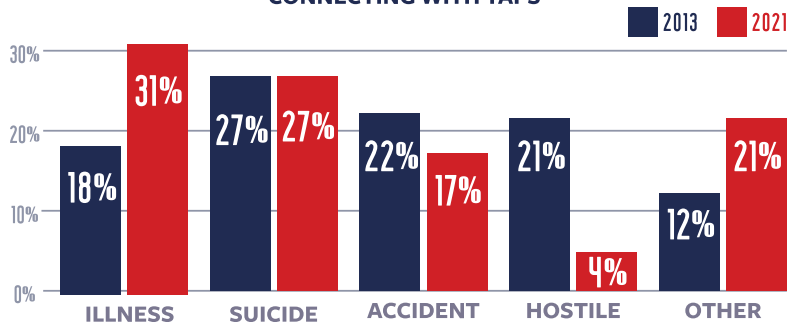


**20% LOVED ONES**

### DUTY STATUS OF NEW MILITARY LOVED ONES CONNECTING WITH TAPS IN 2021



### CAUSE OF DEATH OF MILITARY DECEASED AMONG NEW SURVIVORS CONNECTING WITH TAPS



\*Other includes Friendly Fire, Homicide, Non-Combat Related Incidents, Non-Hostile, Undetermined, or Unknown at time of intake with TAPS. Numbers will vary upon connection with military survivors to identify cause of death

### LENGTH OF TIME SINCE LOSS AMONG NEW SURVIVORS CONNECTING WITH TAPS IN 2021



WE *provide* COMFORT, CARE, AND RESOURCES TO ALL THOSE GRIEVING THE DEATH OF A MILITARY LOVED ONE.

WE *honor* OUR MILITARY MEN AND WOMEN BY CARING FOR ALL THOSE THEY LOVED AND LEFT BEHIND.





# TAPS VALUES

## How we heal

*Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we are a family of military survivors ready to embrace and connect all who grieve the death of a military loved one with resources, services, and programs. TAPS provides support to survivors regardless of the manner of death, the duty status at the time of death, the survivor's relationship to the deceased, or the survivor's phase in their grief journey. TAPS is fortunate to work with leading experts in the field of grief, bereavement, trauma, and peer support to integrate decades of research on military grief into action to help heal hearts.*

## At TAPS we:

- 1 HONOR AND REMEMBER:** We cherish the life of our fallen heroes and celebrate military survivors as the living legacies of their loved ones' service and sacrifice.
- 2 EMPOWER:** We empower survivors with healthy coping tools, resources, and opportunities to connect in the comfort of their home, their community, their region, and the nation to grow with their grief.
- 3 CONNECT:** We connect all those grieving a military death 24/7 to a nationwide network of peer-based emotional survivor support and critical casework assistance.
- 4 EDUCATE:** We inform and educate using research-informed best practices in bereavement and trauma care for survivors and advocate on behalf of survivors with policy and legislative priorities.
- 5 CREATE COMMUNITY:** We build community with survivors to provide comprehensive comfort, care, and resources where they live when they need it, and in a manner comfortable for them.

## CORE SERVICES

Peer-Based Emotional Support

24/7 National Military  
Survivor Helpline

Community-Based Care

Casework Assistance



## ★ SHARE THE JOURNEY

### Survivor Care Team

**At the frontline of our survivor support is our Survivor Care Team** - caring, dedicated professionals who are survivors themselves. Our team provides inclusive and professional peer-based emotional support to embrace, engage, and empower survivors throughout their grief journey. Our care is appropriate, effective, and proven to enhance the quality of life for all those who are grieving the death of a loved one whose life included military service. Our team members listen and connect survivors with appropriate resources specific to their individual needs, and lay the foundation for a lifelong connection between each survivor and TAPS.



“ When we lose someone we love, time ceases to exist. There’s now only a before their death and an after their death. TAPS helps me to come to a place of peace between these times.”

—Survivor on TAPS Survivor Care Team

753,706+

minutes connecting and comforting military survivors

2,597+

customized Resource Kits sent to military survivors

57,016+

birthday and anniversary cards sent to survivors

192,584+

copies of the quarterly TAPS Magazine delivered free to military survivors and supporters

1,471+

Peer Mentors provided comfort, care, and support to TAPS Survivors by hosting Virtual and In-Person connections

“ The loss of my father to suicide was a tremendous change to my life. Not only was it extremely difficult for me to process, it changed my family dynamics and made it very difficult to be a family. My Peer Mentor meant so much to me just knowing I was not the only one to have gone through this. It gave me hope knowing that it is possible to survive and even flourish after. There is almost no way to prepare for such trauma, nor do we live our lives in such a way that we can immediately cope properly with what has happened. I feel deep down that it is now my turn to help others through their journey.”

— Surviving adult child

### Peer Mentors

Regardless of where you call home, a military loss is an emotional journey shared among survivors across the country. In addition to our larger seminars and camps, we also connect survivors with each other in their hometowns through specialized resource guides, local TAPS groups, and peer-based support.

We know the most impactful way to care for survivors is to empower each other. We train adult survivors who are at least 18 months beyond their own loss, and at a healthy point in their grief journey, to volunteer and support another newly bereaved survivor.



## TAPS is here 24/7

Staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, our National Military Survivor Helpline is the only 24/7 helpline for all who are grieving the loss of their military loved one. All callers are immediately connected with a live-answer caring TAPS professional. In 2021, TAPS responded to survivors calling for casework assistance, emotional support to include concerns regarding the withdrawal of Afghanistan, their experience with military grief, and requesting information to connect with other TAPS programs.



★ SURVIVOR SERVICES

## Top Three REASONS. SURVIVORS CONNECT WITH TAPS.

- 1 EMOTIONAL PEER SUPPORT
- 2 CASEWORK ASSISTANCE
- 3 CONNECT WITH OTHERS OF A SIMILAR LOSS

## GROWING WITH GRIEF

The number of new survivors connecting with TAPS each year continues to rise. We are preparing to increase the number of our Survivor Care Team members, with an emphasis on those grieving a death by illness, were caregivers prior to becoming survivors, and siblings.

79%  
of all new military survivors TAPS welcomed in 2021 are over the age of 18

168,143  
24/7 connections with all in need through the TAPS Live website chat

“ Thank you once again for your kindness this morning. Just talking to you... I felt encouraged and supported going forward in my journey.”

— Survivor on the TAPS 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline

**SURVIVOR SUPPORT**

**5,182**  
cases resolved

**EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**\$390K**  
in emergency relief

**RETROACTIVE BENEFITS**

**\$2.4M**  
secured for  
military survivors



**CASEWORK ASSISTANCE & EDUCATION SUPPORT**

# CONNECTING SURVIVORS WITH BENEFITS

*In a time of immense grief, survivors often face piles of paperwork* that must be completed to access resources and benefits. Our Casework and Education Support Services team advocates for survivors to address the complexity of these immediate needs. Survivors turn to us with questions relating to funeral honors, benefits, financial hardships, and legal concerns. They often need help obtaining records, official documents, and reports. Third-party entities - like other national service organizations, government agencies, and funeral homes also connect new military surviving families directly to our Casework and Education Support Services team. Each year, the number of survivors who request and receive support from the Casework and Education Support team continues to increase.



**Survivor Support**

Supporting survivors of a military death through the complexities after the loss of their military member

- Official Papers | Employment
- Headstone | Healthcare
- Investigations | Line of Duty
- Legal Cases | Medals
- Personal Effects | Survivor Flags



**Financial Assistance**

Providing emergency financial support in their greatest time of need

- Groceries | Mortgage/Rent
- Lost Income | Funeral Expenses
- Post-Mortem Cleaning
- Travel Costs | Moving Expenses
- Clothing | School Supplies
- Holiday Support | Tutoring



**Retroactive Benefits**

Retroactive benefits awarded to survivors with the support of TAPS Casework Assistance Team

- DFAS (SBP, SSIA, AOP)
- VA (DIC and Survivor Pension)
- OSGLI (SGLI and SGLI-DE)



# ★ PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

education

*For survivors pursuing secondary education, we align their educational goals with federal, state, and private benefits and scholarships to minimize out-of-pocket expenses. We are recognized for our expertise in identifying, aligning, and maximizing survivors' educational goals with benefits and resources. Additionally, we continue to provide graduating high school seniors and incoming college freshmen with a customized Education Resource Report that provides on-campus resources, along with a personalized report of federal, state, and private education benefits and scholarships available.*

## The TAPS Resource Guide

Our new app is available to military survivors on app stores to serve as a guide to educational resources. Survivors are able to access information and resources on comparing and choosing the perfect school, complete checklists of tips and suggestions to prepare for post-secondary education and the admission process, as well as an archived video library of webinars from our Education Support Coordinators all from the convenience of their personal handheld device.

## College Prep for Teens and Parents

Navigating college applications can be a challenge for high school students. Military survivors face that challenge in addition to navigating their grief journey.

In 2021, TAPS welcomed college-bound survivors virtually where they learned about resume building, budgeting, networking, and ways to present themselves professionally. Survivors also learned about education benefits, FAFSA scholarship, and how to apply to and select a college.



**\$241M**

in Education Benefits identified for military survivors



**165**

customized education Resource Kits distributed



**1,700+**

number of new survivors projected to connect with TAPS for educational benefits in 2022

“ I’ve taken my loss and treated it as a way to pay it forward by helping others. I am constantly encouraging others to seek help and sharing my story with hope that it’ll inspire others to engage with TAPS. TAPS provides us with a safe space to help remove the negative stigma behind suicide. I would give everything for one more minute with my husband, but my loss has steered me down a path I never even imagined.”

27%

of all new 2021 military survivors connecting with TAPS grieve a military loved one who died by suicide

# A PARTNER IN GROWTH

**We have supported more than 19,000 suicide loss survivors and** has developed and published the best-practice TAPS Suicide Postvention Model™. Our Suicide Postvention department provides comfort, care, and resources specific to suicide loss survivors, coordinates and hosts the only National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar, and provides subject matter consultations on best practices around postvention responses and strategies. We believe that postvention must be a critical component of any suicide prevention strategy, and in doing so, helps to save lives from suicide.

232

Suicide Loss Survivors attended the 13th Annual National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp

100

Over requests for evidence-informed best practices on suicide pre-/postvention

78%

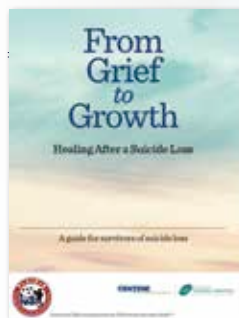
of newly bereaved suicide loss survivors said they had hope for the future after attending the 2021 National Suicide Survivor Seminar

The TAPS National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp is the world’s largest annual gathering of military suicide loss survivors. In 2021, TAPS hosted the 13th Annual National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp where we provide trauma-informed care, peer-to-peer grief support, access to resources and experts, grief workshops, art therapy, family activities, and loving, compassionate care.

2,529

new military suicide loss survivors connected with TAPS in 2021

TAPS has cultivated partnerships with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Association of Suicidology, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, Stop Soldier Suicide, and the Home Base Intensive Clinical Program, monitored by the Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry.



Several Major accomplishments included the journal publication titled, “TAPS Suicide Postvention Model: A Comprehensive Framework of Healing and Growth,” as well as the publication of the new TAPS guidebook for survivors of suicide loss titled “From Grief to Growth: Healing After a Suicide Loss.”™

# IN HONOR OF THEIR SERVICE

In 2021, the TAPS Policy team educated government officials on the impact of policy and legislation on hundreds of thousands military survivors. Following multiple testimonies before Congress submissions of multiple systems for the record on critical survivor issues, TAPS shares the needs and experience of military survivors across all manners of death, duty statuses, and relationships to the deceased. TAPS also advocates for surviving families through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Federal Advisory Committee on Veterans' Families, Caregivers, and Survivors, and Chairs the Survivor Subcommittee. In 2022, TAPS will continue to provide subject matter expertise and represent survivors with the White House, VA, Department of Defense (DoD), and all government agencies impacting survivors.

## 2022 GOALS

**RECOGNIZE** all who served and died regardless of how or where the death occurred

**ADVOCATE** for illness loss survivors and veterans of toxic exposure

**ADVANCE** suicide prevention and postvention policies

**INCREASE** Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

**RETAIN** benefits upon remarriage

**IMPROVE** death gratuity to align with intended purpose

**PRESERVE** and enhance survivor benefits

**STRENGTHEN** educational support for surviving families

## TAPS Advocates For All Military Survivors

- 1 **Gold Star Families Remembrance Week.** TAPS worked with Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Representative Dan Newhouse (R-WA-04) on the Gold Star Families Remembrance Week Resolution (September 19 - 25). This week recognizes the families of all military personnel who died while serving or from a service-connected injury or illness. TAPS has led efforts to ensure this inclusive resolution guarantees that no surviving military family is forgotten.
- 2 **Toxic Exposure.** As the leading voice for the families of those who died due to illness connected to toxic exposure, TAPS testified in support of a myriad of toxic exposure bills.
  - Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act of 2021 (S.3003)**
    - ★ Ensures toxic exposure veterans get immediate, lifelong access to VA health care
    - ★ Establishes consistent, transparent framework based on medical and scientific evidence to establish new presumptions of service connection between conditions and exposure
  - Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2021 (H.R.3967)**
    - ★ Provides healthcare for 3.5M veterans exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits
    - ★ Streamlines VA's review process and require medical exams and opinions
- 3 **Mental Health.** TAPS continues to work with the VA, DoD, and Congress to expand mental health services to all surviving families.
  - Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act (H.R.5029)**
    - ★ Provides Vet Center counseling/mental health services to the families of veteran suicide
    - ★ Decrease risk for survivors of veteran suicide to include National Guard and Reserve
- 4 **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Increase.** TAPS and the survivor community have supported increasing DIC for many years. It is the top priority for the Military Coalition (TMC) Survivor Committee, which TAPS co-chairs.
- 5 **Caring for Survivors Act of 2021 (S.976, H.R.3402)**
  - ★ Surviving military spouses who remarry before the age of 55 presently lose their survivor benefits
  - ★ Brings DIC in line with benefits to surviving spouses of Federal employees Comprehensive Remarriage Legislation
  - ★ TAPS support of this legislation ensures the introduction of a comprehensive remarriage bill to include all surviving military spouses





# WHEN A CAREGIVER BECOMES A SURVIVOR, WE'RE HERE



As the nation's home for survivors across all manners of death, we are ever mindful of the unique needs specific to survivors who were once caregivers. By partnering with government agencies and non-profit organizations, we are working collaboratively and have implemented a life-altering program to compassionately support those who were a military or veteran caregiver along their grief journey as survivors. Many military loss survivors provide support to their loved one as a caregiver, and now they grieve their loss from complications due to injuries or illnesses related to their exposures to toxins. Other military loss survivors were caregivers of a service member with invisible wounds and illnesses to include Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), or Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) that may have contributed to their sudden death by suicide.

## MILITARY DEATHS DUE TO ILLNESS WERE THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG ALL NEW 2021 TAPS SURVIVORS

# 31%

of all new 2021 military survivors connected with TAPS grieve the death of their loved one by illness



# 64%

of all illness loss survivors responding to a survey reported their loved one required a caregiver before their death

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

**LEADING** a campaign to increase public awareness

**LEARNING** more about the challenge from caregivers and survivors

**SUPPORTING** the needs of caregivers and survivors

**PARTNERING** with organizations to create a Caregiver to Survivor Program

“ TAPS has been life-changing for us. There in our darkest hours to be our guiding light toward a new path. One a little dimmer, but a journey no longer traveled alone. Thank you for EVERYTHING you've done for my family!”

— Surviving spouse on the TAPS Caregiver to Survivor support

# TAPS ILLNESS LOSS SURVIVOR SURVEY

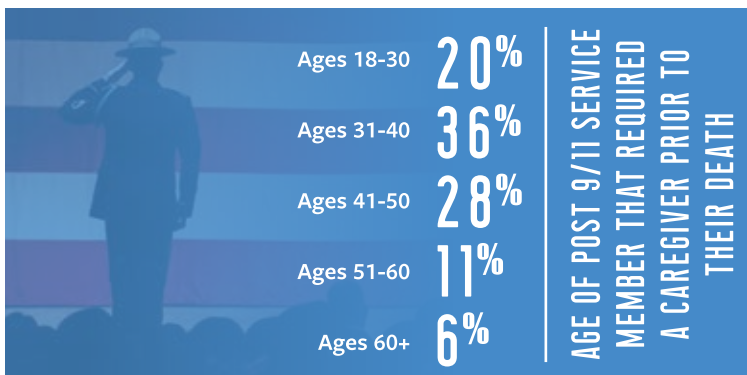
## 2021 Findings Summary

**In 2019, TAPS began work on the Illness Loss Survivor Survey.** This survey, completed by survivors grieving the death of a loved one due to an illness, helped TAPS better understand the breadth of illnesses that resulted in a military member's death and types of illnesses that may be connected to toxic exposures.

After reviewing preliminary results, TAPS decided to narrow the focus of the survey and launched a second version of the survey in July 2020. The goal was to help TAPS and the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Congress better understand how serving in the military post 9/11 may impact the health of military members.

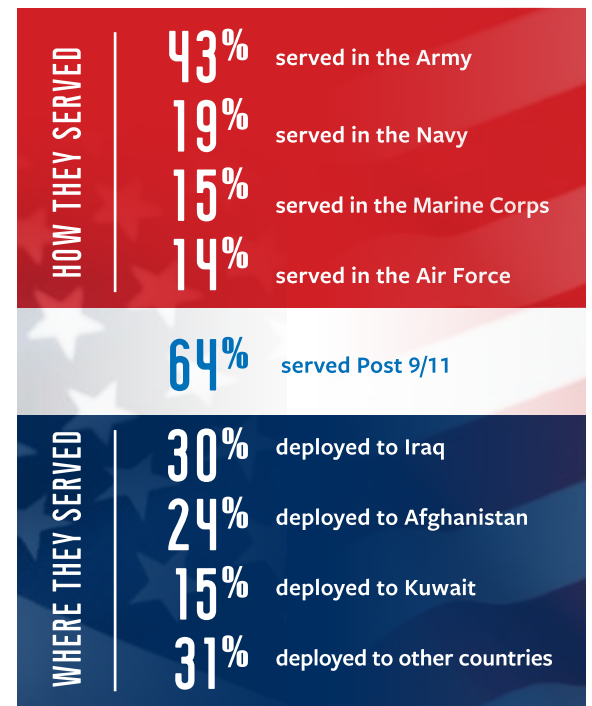
**Summary:** The survey was distributed to a potential respondent sample of 14,000 illness loss survivors through email. Of all approximately 14,000 who received the email, **1,268 SURVIVORS** accessed the Survey as of June 2021. Survivors who completed the survey were asked to share key information about their loved one's experience, including their branch of service, locations to which they deployed as part of their military service, and if they deployed out of the country pre or post 9/11 or both. **984 RESPONDENTS** provided sufficient data for analysis:

**Caregiver:** Approximately **55%** of post 9/11 service members required a caregiver prior to their death. Among this group, **84%** required a caregiver prior to their death before the age of 50.



**Cancer Diagnosis:** **52%** of all respondents reported their loved one had been diagnosed with cancer. Further analysis revealed little difference between war cohort, branch of service, or deployment locations. The rates of cancer among pre- and post-9/11 service members were at **53%** and **48%** respectively.

## Further Analysis



**Misdiagnoses:** Misdiagnoses occurred in **ABOUT 40%** of post-9/11 service members. Among this group, misdiagnoses were common across all ages and branches but were most likely in those who served in the Army. Among age groups of post-9/11 service members, those ages 31-40 had the highest misdiagnosis rate.

Part of the Strategic Plan for 2022 will include expanding the scope of the survey to be more inclusive of caregivers across all demographics to include survivors of wounded, ill, or injured, and those who died by suicide and required a caregiver prior to their passing.

*This survey and analysis has been made possible through a collaboration with Deloitte Consulting LLP.*

“ While walking Hero Hall [at the National Seminar] I saw my Battle Buddy’s face. It was as if I had seen a ghost. I felt loss, sadness, and pain all at the same time. But then I felt hope. Hope that his son who was only 1 when his dad died might be here. He was.

This was a moment I will forever carry with me. Thank you, Bonnie and thank you TAPS for this and every other moment out there like this still to come or that has already happened.”

— Active Duty service member on volunteering as a Military Mentor at the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp

# IN HONOR OF THEIR SERVICE

*Mentorship by adult role models is key for our military surviving children. Military Mentors are active duty service members or veterans of the Armed Forces who selflessly volunteer their time to make a one-on-one connection with a grieving child at a TAPS Youth Program.*

<p>TAPS will need to attract and retain</p> <h2>1,500</h2> <p>members of the military to serve as Military Mentors to grieving military children in 2022</p>	<h2>700+</h2> <p>mentor engagements with surviving military families virtually and in-person in 2021</p>	<h2>81%</h2> <p>of mentors intend to serve as a Military Mentor again</p>
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“ I know I wouldn’t be where I am today without having Military Mentors and Group Leaders who take the time to listen and really want to help me. I feel like I can help my little brother because of what I learn here.”

— Surviving teen on the TAPS Good Grief Camp at the National Military Survivor Seminar



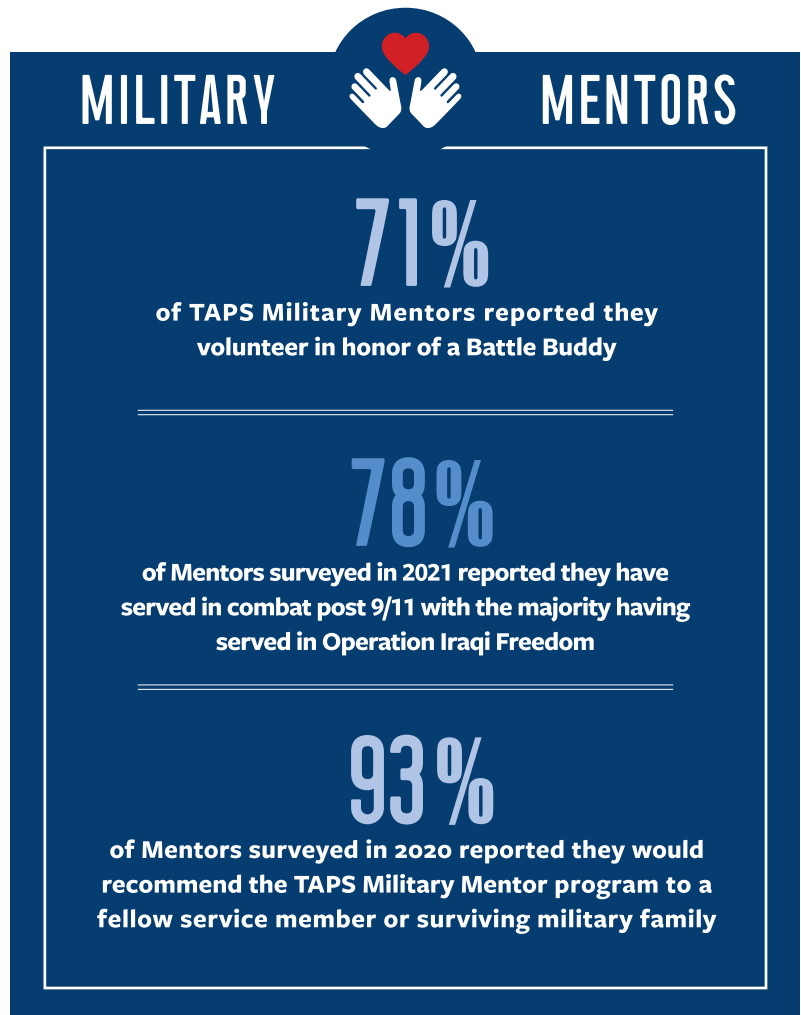
“ Thank each and everyone of you for being part of such a wonderful program. I appreciate TAPS tremendously, I don’t know where I would be in life if it weren’t for all of you. Seriously. My life would not be what it is now if it wasn’t for TAPS. You have saved my life and given me purpose.”

— Surviving Adult Child and Legacy Mentor



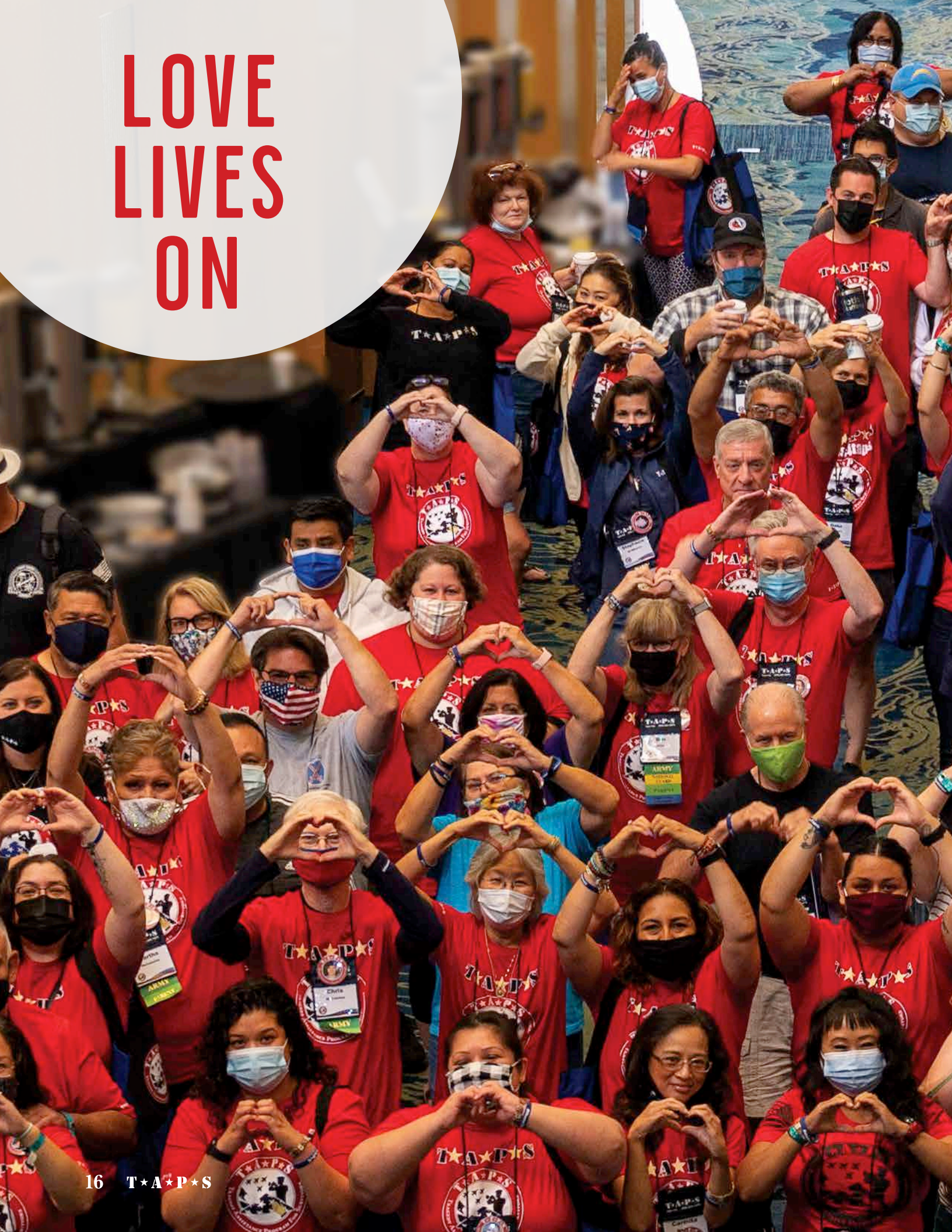
## LEGACY MENTORS

*Legacy Mentors are very special mentors for our surviving military children. Legacy Mentors are survivors who have attended TAPS Good Grief Camps as a surviving military child and have now graduated and returned to mentor younger survivors. The Legacy Mentors represent how the community of TAPS has walked alongside them to remember the love, celebrate the life, and share the journey.*





# LOVE LIVES ON









# CONNECTING WITH EXPERTS

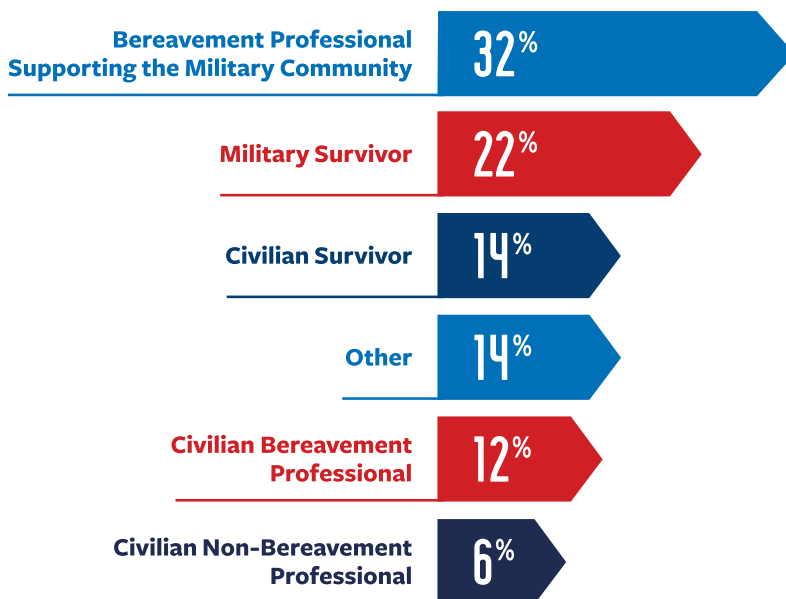
The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® empowers the bereaved and enhances the expertise of professionals caring for all those grieving with resilience and wellness education.

## 2021 COURSES INCLUDED:

- *Mindfulness as Your Superpower*
- *From Grief to Peace*
- *Where Faith Meets Grief*
- *Navigating Conversations Around Grief and the Holidays*
- *The Helper’s Journey*

A sought-after resource around the world, the Institute features insightful programs and training delivered by experts in their fields. The Institute selects presenters from our highly skilled and credentialed staff, members of our Advisory Board, and nationally and internationally recognized professionals based on their expertise on grief and loss, wellness, resilience, and posttraumatic growth. The Institute provides courses and continuing education to survivors, social workers, nurses, funeral directors, casualty officers, chaplains, grief professionals, trauma counselors, and others.

## Who registers for Institute programs?



2021 TAPS INSTITUTE WORLDWIDE ATTENDEES

“ This webinar helped remind me to let others in. The emptiness feeling is so overwhelming. Our family has lost four loved ones this year in our immediate family. One was my husband. All of our losses were within three months of each other. It is easy to turn inward and isolate, but very unhealthy. Thank you for this information. It was very helpful. I find myself praying everyday for strength and courage.”

—Military Survivor on “Where Faith Meets Grief”

# OUR SUPPORT, RIGHT NEXT DOOR

## Care Groups

Facilitated by at least one Peer Mentor and often a Mental Health Professional, our local grief support groups, known as Care Groups, provide opportunities for military survivors grieving a loved one the opportunity to connect both in-person or virtually. TAPS Care Group meetings are safe places where survivors can give and receive peer support while building strong relationships throughout their grief journeys and nurture the essence of trust as they share their loved ones life stories. Together we heal, discover ways to honor our loved ones, and share their legacies.

## Community Resource Reports

We prepare Community Resource Reports for military survivors by contacting local bereavement groups, parenting support groups, and community organizations. Each report is specific to the survivor's local community, their relationship to their military loved one, and the manner of death they are grieving.

## Counseling Connections

We deliver comfort close to home through access to local grief support services, free clinical counseling when available, and online support. Our counseling connections staff use their training and networks to link survivors to local grief support resources and mental health professionals.

## TAPS Together

We unite military survivors together around an activity or local social setting to help survivors find connection and strengthen their community support. At TAPS Together, survivors connect and meet other military survivors to share strength and hope. In 2021, survivors connected through golf with Top Golf, community walks with Carry the Load, coffee meet and greets with Starbucks, Transportation Museum tours, memorial monuments across the nation, the Stockyards in Ft. Hood, TX, the Smithsonian Zoo, concerts, baseball games, park tours, and more!

“I’ve really enjoyed the thoughtful conversations in Dare to Lead workshops. I look forward to staying in touch with this TAPS group to stay accountable, and continue to learn and see how everyone else is implementing what we have learned going forward. Thank you so much for presenting those opportunities.”

—Military survivor connecting with TAPS Together: Dare to Lead

**DARE TO LEAD** Survivors attended Dr. Brené Brown program titled: Dare to Lead where they were able to connect and enhance their personal and professional leadership skills. Since the first offering of the Dr. Brené Brown Dare to Lead program, over 250 military survivors across 6 cohorts have graduated from the program.

**BOOK CLUB** TAPS Together Book Club promotes a love of literature in a positive, nurturing environment. Survivors come together in a community to learn about and discuss published works to grow and enhance their well-being. This year the Book Club reviewed:

- *Braving the Wilderness*, Dr. Brené Brown
- *Daring Greatly*, Dr. Brené Brown
- *Search Inside Yourself*, Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (SIYLI - Google)

**PODCAST CLUB - DARE TO LEAD.** TAPS survivors participated in more than 37 events using Dr. Brené Brown Podcasts for nearly 150 survivor engagements to connect and listen to conversations with change-catalysts, culture-shifters who are innovating, creating, and daring to lead.

290 CARE GROUPS  
1,448 CARE GROUP SURVIVORS

215 TAPS TOGETHERS  
3,784 TAPS TOGETHER SURVIVORS

1,999 SURVIVORS CONNECTED WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY

80% OF SURVIVORS ATTENDING A TAPS CARE GROUP REPORTED FEELING MORE CONNECTED TO THEIR FELLOW SURVIVORS

93% OF SURVIVORS REPORTED TAPS CARE GROUPS PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THEM TO PROCESS AND SHARE THEIR GRIEF

## ★ SURVIVOR PROGRAMS

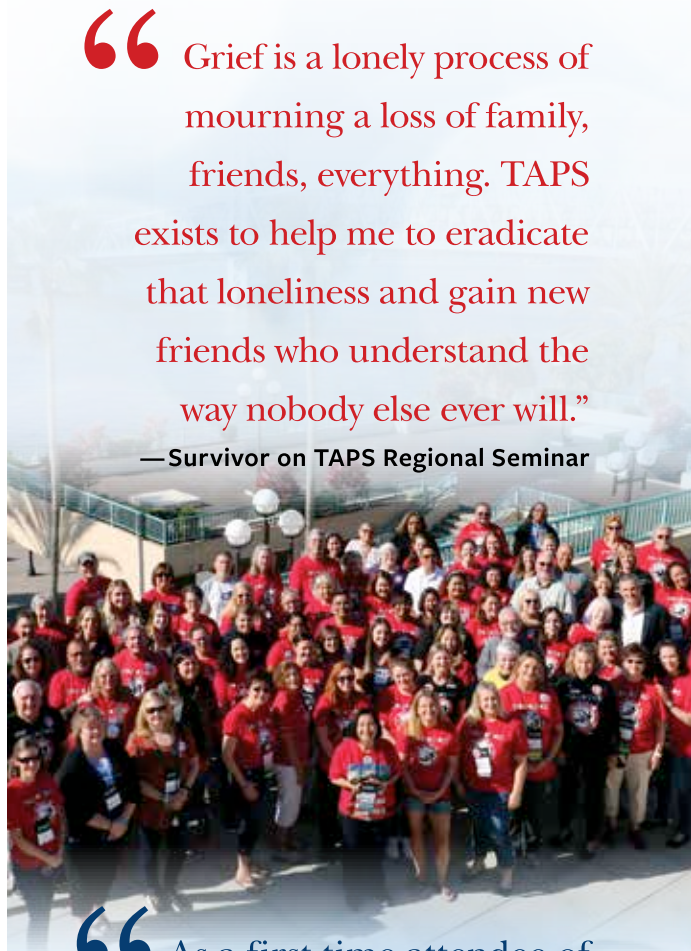
**TAPS survivors build community, connect with experts,** and experience hope when attending a TAPS survivor seminar. Each year, TAPS welcomes all military survivors at our regional and national seminars to offer support and connections to surviving loved ones in all phases of their grief journey. TAPS seminars are safe spaces for survivors to share stories of their military loved ones and experience a community of hope and healing. To ensure the safety of military survivors, TAPS welcomed survivors in-person and virtually.

### Top Three MOST POPULAR WORKSHOPS AT A TAPS SEMINAR:

- 1 Managing Guilt and Regret after Loss
- 2 Spirituality and Grief: A Conversation about Faith and Belief after Loss
- 3 Metaphors for Healing

### Top Three REASONS SURVIVORS ATTEND SEMINARS:

- 1 Support, understanding, acceptance, a place they belong
- 2 Connect with others who share a similar loss, peer support
- 3 Good Grief Camp for children



“Grief is a lonely process of mourning a loss of family, friends, everything. TAPS exists to help me to eradicate that loneliness and gain new friends who understand the way nobody else ever will.”

—Survivor on TAPS Regional Seminar

“As a first time attendee of a TAPS event I felt like I was swimming in a sea of pain and life rafts were everywhere I looked! The freedom to experience grief was overwhelmingly helpful and the continued reassurance that the environment was judgement free allowed me to release painful memories and finally feel free.”

—First-time military survivor attending a 2021 TAPS seminar

**4,786** Military survivors attended 7 National and Regional virtual and in-person seminars in 2021

**80%** of attending survivors learned new information at TAPS seminars to help them cope with their grief

**84%** of attending survivors of respondents reported the seminar helped them feel socially connected



# A LIFETIME OF HEALING

*The death of military loved ones leave behind survivors of all ages.*

We help our young survivors build a community of support in their grief. At our youth programs, children and teenagers find validation as they connect with other young survivors. Children, teens, and families learn how to talk openly about their loss, recognize ways of coping, build positive coping tools, and share their feelings. The hallmark of our youth programming is our Good Grief Camp, where children ages 5 to 18 are connected with mentors to guide them in their grief journey. With children under 5, we provide early childhood programs with age-appropriate activities.

“TAPS is a place to get sadness off of your shoulder and no one will make fun of you”  
— Surviving child (under age 12) at the TAPS Good Grief Camp

21% OF NEW TAPS SURVIVORS IN 2021 ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 18

175 CHILDREN ATTENDED A TAPS YOUTH PROGRAM IN 2021



“My grief is so different from my mom’s. I don’t feel like I can talk about it at home. This is why I have to come to TAPS. I can talk about my grief without worrying about upsetting my mom.”

— Surviving child (over age 13) at the National TAPS Good Grief Camp

## MAJOR TRENDS AMONG SURVIVING MILITARY CHILDREN ENGAGING WITH TAPS IN 2021:

- 1 29% grieving the death of their parent
- 2 27% are grieving the death of their military loved one who died by suicide
- 3 59% are within the first year of their loss

## Good Grief Camps

Held throughout the year alongside our Seminars, Good Grief Camps provide youth ages 5 to 18 with a supportive place to share and learn coping skills through play, talking in small groups, games, crafts, and other activities. Each child is paired with a Military or Legacy Mentor, and children make valuable connections with their peers, finding support and validation for their grief. Our parents report that their children have a sense of belonging with their TAPS Family. They feel like they are not the only child who suffers from loss, are not treated differently by their peers, and have a space to be themselves.

911 CHILDREN ATTENDED TAPS GOOD GRIEF CAMPS  
354 MILITARY MENTORS AND LEGACY MENTORS SUPPORTED MILITARY CHILDREN AT A TAPS GOOD GRIEF CAMP

## Family Camps

TAPS Family Camps offer grieving parents / caregivers of school-age children and their children a chance to heal and grow as a family. Our families leave these camps with enhanced connections between the children and surviving parents to deepen the family connection as they grow together on their grief journey. Together, families evaluate their home life, family values, and learn new ways to understand and support one another.

2 FAMILY CAMPS • 49 ADULT SURVIVORS  
67 CHILD SURVIVORS • 31 MILITARY MENTORS

## Virtual Programming

Since 2020, TAPS Youth Programs have led the way in the creation and facilitation of virtual family support programs. In these sessions, military families connect with Military Mentors and come together as a family to engage in meaningful activities to cope with their grief from the comfort of their own home.

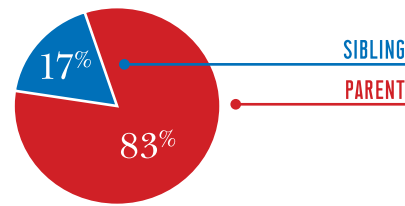
16 VIRTUAL YOUTH PROGRAMS AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN 2021  
98 ATTENDING FAMILIES

# STEPPING INTO ADULTHOOD

Transitioning into adulthood can be a challenge, especially while grieving the loss of an important person in your life. TAPS Young Adults program bridges the gap between our youth and adult programming serving 18 - 30-year-old surviving children and siblings. Our programs help survivors navigate their emotions, make decisions about their educational journey or career path, and build new relationships without delaying their growth in grief. This one-of-a-kind program connects military survivors with a community of peers, supports navigating life transitions, and mentorship for growth in a safe and age-appropriate environment. Together, surviving military Young Adults work through a deliberate curriculum to develop the skills and tools necessary to build a solid foundation for adulthood.



## TAPS MILITARY YOUNG ADULTS CONNECTED WITH TAPS GRIEVING THE DEATH OF THEIR



9% OF ALL TAPS YOUNG ADULTS ARE WITHIN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF LOSS  
 51% OF ALL TAPS YOUNG ADULTS ARE 10+ YEARS POST-LOSS

## Top Three

### WAYS YOUNG ADULTS ARE CONNECTED WITH TAPS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

- 1 Referral from Military Partnership
- 2 Survivor Care Team
- 3 Education Assistance Team

720 YOUNG ADULT SURVIVORS ARE CONNECTED WITH TAPS GRIEVING THE DEATH OF THEIR PARENT OR SIBLING

188 YOUNG ADULTS ATTENDED A TAPS YOUNG ADULT EVENT IN 2021

## YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM FIVE GROWTH PILLARS

- 1 Personal Development
- 2 Financial Stability
- 3 Communications
- 4 Career Development
- 5 Service to Others

73% OF TAPS YOUNG ADULT SURVIVORS ARE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 - 24 YEARS OF AGE

27% OF TAPS YOUNG ADULT SURVIVORS ARE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 25 - 30 YEARS OF AGE



# SISTERS IN GRIEF

***With the goal of moving forward with joy,***

With the goal of moving forward with joy, gratitude, and resilience, our Women's Empowerment program helps bereaved women to redefine identity, reclaim power, and move forward with courage, resilience, and new hope. We focus on the needs of mind, body, and spirit to help survivors clarify their direction in life and create their own paths to growth.

Our program is influenced by the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) model to increase the survivor's psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility means that a person is able to connect to the present moment fully as a conscious individual in their current situation. Individuals with psychological flexibility recognize they have the power to change or continue their behaviors based on their own values within.

Drawing on ACT's guiding principles, the Women's Empowerment program produces measurable and replicable improvements in psychological flexibility and emotional self-regulation skills. In 2021, TAPS continued to offer virtual engagements and connections for all surviving women grieving the loss of their children, spouses, fiancées, significant others, parents, and siblings with tools to promote mindful movement and art therapy.

**“The TAPS events are life savers. TAPS provides a place for us to share and heal. Many of us do not have these safe places where we live. I am much better since connecting with other women who have similar losses.”**

— Survivor on TAPS Women's Empowerment



In 2021, TAPS Women's Empowerment welcomed more first-time attendees than any other program in TAPS.

2,231

women attended 156 Women Empowerment virtual events in 2021



# CREATING NEW MEMORIES

*Watching a game or attending a concert with fellow survivors is more than the event, it's about making new memories. Our Sports & Entertainment programs create meaningful opportunities for survivors to build connections, share memories, and celebrate the life and service of our fallen.*

The TAPS sports program, teams4taps, creates meaningful engagements for survivors to share stories of their loved one with the sports teams and athletes that their loved one cheered for. Doing something their hero would have loved and doing in their honor has been powerful for survivors to experience and a special part of the grief journey. With events like concerts and theater performances, Stars4TAPS creates opportunities for survivors to make new memories with musicians, Broadway productions, and TV and film actors who once brought them and their fallen loved ones joy.

# 1,468

**military survivors connected with Sports & Entertainment for meaningful engagements honoring the life and service of their military loved one**

In 2021, the Sports & Entertainment team continued to grow and be creative to bring joy both in person and right into the safety of survivors' living rooms. Transitioning back to in-person events, the team welcomed survivors in cities across America and also across the pond in London where we continued to honor life and service and the loved ones left behind. The connections made allow for those new memories and also new bonds and friendships that build on the foundation of the grief support services TAPS provides every day. We also welcomed survivors who were new to TAPS and invited them into the welcoming arms of our partners who honor the heroes and also recognize the family and their sacrifice.



**108**  
Sports & Entertainment  
engagements honoring

**426**  
military deceased





# HONORING THE LIVING LEGACY OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE WITH SURVIVORS OF MILITARY LOSS AROUND THE WORLD



AS AMERICAN TROOPS WITHDREW FROM AFGHANISTAN, TAPS HOSTED PROGRAMS AND HELD GATHERINGS TO ASSURE SURVIVORS THAT SERVICE AND SACRIFICE IN THE MILITARY HAS MEANING AND PURPOSE.



KURDISTAN IRAQ • TAPS BROUGHT CULTURES TOGETHER WITH DELEGATIONS OF THE WIDOWS, MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF LOSS IN AMERICA AND IRAQ. MEETING IN KURDISTAN TO HONOR THEIR FALLEN HEROES.



ISTANBUL, TURKEY • NETWORKING WITH NGOS AROUND THE WORLD ARE CRITICAL. IN ISTANBUL AND GENEVA, TAPS WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT.



ROME, ITALY • WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE ITALIAN MILITARY AND SURVIVING FAMILIES, TAPS IS MENTORING THE CREATION OF A SURVIVOR ORGANIZATION IN ITALY.



TAPS is an organization for all those who are grieving their military loved one. We are part of a family, and part of a community, just as our loved ones shared a mission and common goal with like-minded individuals. They served side by side not only with their American battle buddies, but with militaries from around the world all striving to meet shared missions. Today, we have American troops in over 175 countries. We are defending freedom, bringing aid, keeping the peace, and ensuring a future that is safe and secure.

As survivors, we are now part of a global community of military grievers, speaking the universal language of love and loss, hope and healing. We transcend religious and cultural differences. We rise above politics. We join together in honor, remembrance, hope and love. In 2021, TAPS International invited partner organizations from around the world to meet for an International Working Group of organizations caring for families of deceased military.

If you are interested in learning more or joining TAPS International for an upcoming trip, please email [global@taps.org](mailto:global@taps.org)!



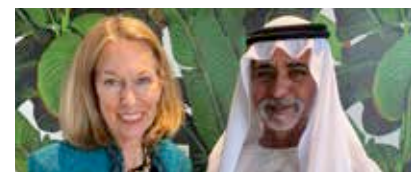
DNIPRO, UKRAINE • TAPS UKRAINE BENCHMARKED BEST PRACTICES IN PEER BASED EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO HEAL THE HEARTS OF MORE THAN 15,000 SURVIVING MILITARY FAMILIES.



LONDON, ENGLAND • TEAMS4TAPS ONCE AGAIN TOOK AMERICAN MILITARY FAMILIES TO LONDON TO JOIN WITH THEIR BRITISH COUNTERPARTS TO HONOR AND REMEMBER LOVED ONES.



TRIPOLI, LIBYA • AS THE COUNTRY RECOVERS FROM CIVIL WAR, TAPS OFFERED TRAINING IN HEALING AND RECONCILIATION TO WIDOWS IN TRIPOLI, LIBYA.



ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES • BONNIE CARROLL MEETING WITH SHEIKH NAHYAN BIN MUBARAK AL NAHYAN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES MINISTER OF CULTURE, YOUTH, AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF TOLERANCE.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



# A Message from the Chairman of the Board

As a patriot, it is our national duty to carry forward the words of Harry S. Truman, “Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.” Supporting the work of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors is how each of us can ensure America never forgets the sacrifices of the service men and women who died and served our great nation.

In 2021, 9,246 newly bereaved individuals found comfort, resources, hope, and healing through TAPS, and we are projecting to welcome even more as we look forward to 2022.

**This year, TAPS:**

**WELCOMED** more than **13,300 adults** and over **1,800 children** who attended a TAPS Camp, seminar, or retreat.

**CONNECTED** with **1,674 mental health professionals** to support survivors with grief and trauma.

**SHARED** personal notes of honor and remembrance with **46,231 survivors** on the anniversaries of their loved ones’ deaths, reminding them that they are not alone in their grief journeys.

TAPS provides services to include the TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline, retreats, resources, and more for nearly 100,000 surviving loved ones of America’s fallen heroes 24/7/365, on a very lean \$16 million annual budget. We invest 87% of every dollar donated into programs for military survivors. TAPS has been a platinum-rated charity running with Charity Navigator for nine years because of our careful stewardship of donor dollars.

There are so many ways to get involved: become a sponsor, attend our gala, host a fundraiser, share the mission by following us on social media, or even sign up to receive our free quarterly TAPS Magazine or our newsletter.

We are only able to provide this life-saving support to all those grieving the death of a military loved one because of generous donors, supporters, and partners - patriots like you. I am proud of the work this great organization provides and as you read within this impact report, you will see just how much your contributions are supporting all those grieving the death of a military loved one. For your support, I am eternally grateful.

**John B. Wood,**  
Chairman, TAPS Board of Directors

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# WAYS TO SUPPORT



join us  
**2,114+**

volunteers donated their time  
and talent in 2021 to provide

**32,975+**  
hours worth of support

*TAPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is funded by the generosity of donors who care deeply about our nation's legacy of service and sacrifice.*

## DONATE

- DONATE NOW
- DONATE YOUR VEHICLE FOR TAPS
- PLANNED OR ESTATE GIVING

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- COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN
- EMPLOYER MATCHED GIVING
- GIFT CARD DRIVE
- FILL THE BACKPACK

## SPONSOR

- HOST A FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER
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- AMAZON SMILE
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## VOLUNTEER

- VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME
- MILITARY MENTORS
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For more information about supporting TAPS, email [development@taps.org](mailto:development@taps.org)





DONORS



# JOIN OUR SPONSORS



Donate Now

Our team is ready to guide you through the process of creating a successful partnership. Join us at [taps.org/sponsorship](https://taps.org/sponsorship)

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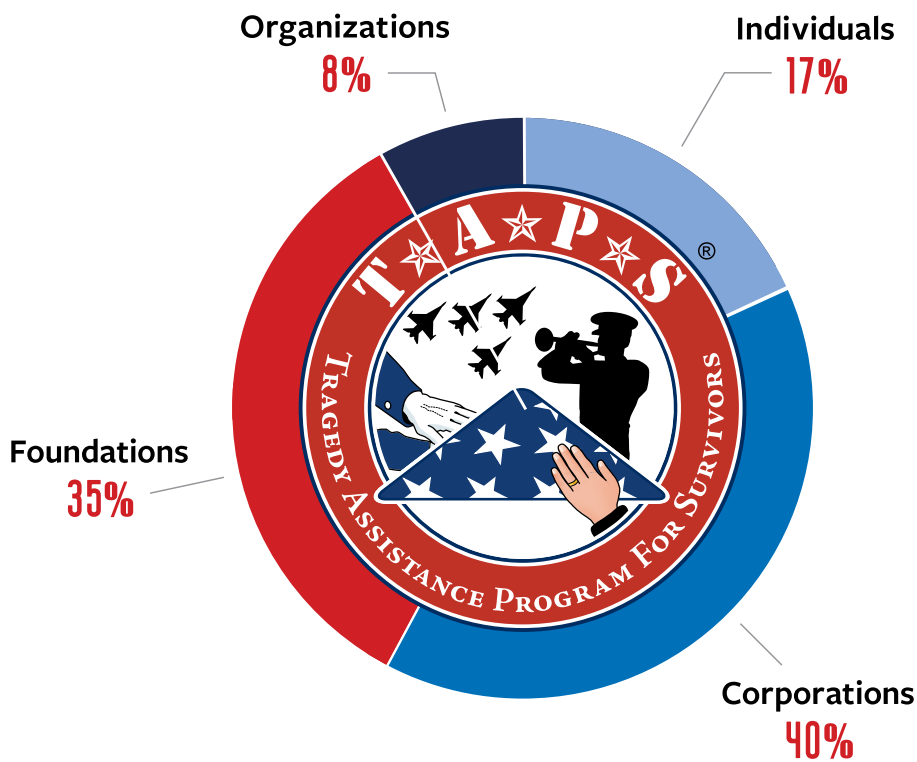
AIR Communities | Arnold & Porter | Bloomberg Philanthropies | Color Street Foundation | Colorado Rockies Baseball Club | D.G. Yuengling & Son, Inc. | Funeral Service Foundation | General Dynamics | Health Net Federal Services | Lockheed Martin Corporation | Marine Toys for Tots | Monumental Sports and Entertainment Foundation | National Basketball Association | National Park Trust | Parsons | Robert Irvine Foundation | The Arthur M Blank Family Foundation | The John Hopkins University | TriWest Healthcare Alliance | Veterans United Foundation



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We were able to provide programs and services in 2021 thanks to the **\$16 million** we received in generous support from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

## 2021 Funding Represented by our donors



**\$0.87 OF EVERY DOLLAR PROVIDES DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO TAPS SURVIVORS.**

**87%** GRIEF AND TRAUMA SUPPORT FOR MILITARY SURVIVORS

23% SURVIVOR SERVICES  
54% SURVIVOR PROGRAMS  
23% SURVIVOR EVENTS

**7%** FUNDRAISING  
to provide survivors with 24/7 care and support

**6%** ADMINISTRATION  
keeping the lights on for the families of America's Fallen Heroes... TAPS is always here

\* The financial results included in this report may contain unaudited figures. TAPS complete audited financial statements can be found at [TAPS.org/Financials](https://TAPS.org/Financials).





## In Honor of Those Who Have Served and Died



Your generous donation of funds, time,  
and talent supports the TAPS mission.

**EIN 92-0152268**

**202.588.TAPS(8277) ★ TAPS.ORG ★ @TAPSoRG**

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