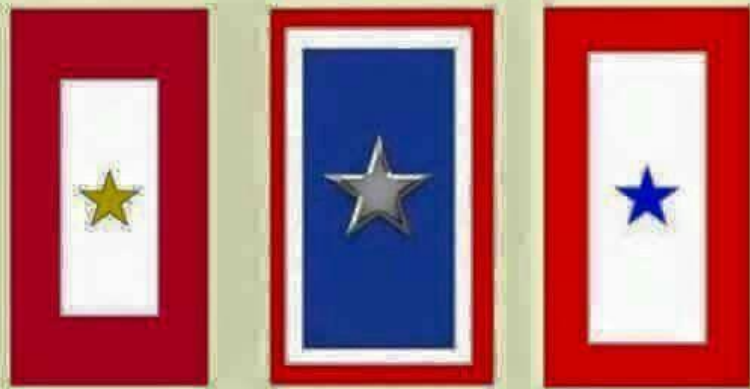


AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY



*Do you know your military Star Families?*



*Gold Star Families - Have lost a loved one during military service*  
*Silver Star Families - Have someone who was injured during military service*  
*Blue Star Families - Have someone actively serving in a branch of service*

**Wednesday, June 3, 2026**

## The Blue Star Banner

The Service flag is an official banner authorized by the Department of Defense for display by families who have members serving in the Armed Forces during any period of war or hostilities the United States may be engaged in for the duration of such hostilities.

The Service flag, also called the Blue Star Flag, was designed and patented by WWI Army Captain Robert L. Queisser of the 5th Ohio Infantry, who had two sons serving on the front line. The flag quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in service.

During WWII, the practice of displaying the Service flag became much more widespread. Most flags were handmade by mothers across the nation. One of the most famous flags was that of the five Sullivan brothers, who all perished on the U.S.S. Juneau.

In 1966, the Department of Defense revised the specifications for design, manufacture, and display of the Service flag.

The Department of Defense specifies that family members authorized to display the flag include the wife, husband, mother, father, stepmother, parent through adoption, foster parents, children, sister, and half-brothers or sisters of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. The flag should be displayed in a window of the residence of persons authorized.

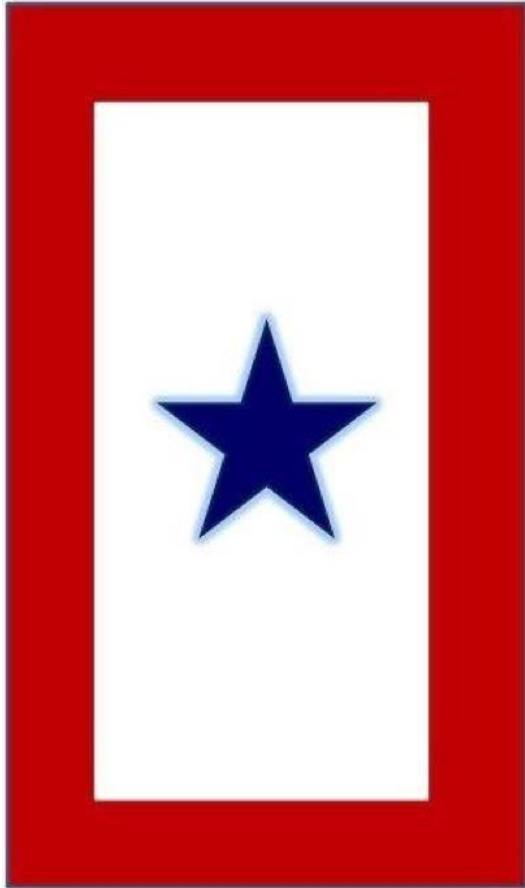
**An organization** may also display the Service flag to honor the members of that organization serving during a period of war or hostilities.

The Service Flag is an indoor flag and should be flown facing out from the front window of the home or organization.

Each blue star on the flag represents a service member in active duty.

Silver Star Service Banner Day recognizes the sacrifices of the survivors. Military families are the backbone of the military, who defend freedom. Families proudly wave the Blue Star as they support their loved ones from home. Military families are also the hands used to heal, grasp, guide, and hold when their loved ones are wounded. The Silver Star banner is the only one of the three stars for which loved ones of the wounded ought to be recognized for their continual care of an injured veteran.

This Silver Star Service Banner Day, let us remember and honor the wounded, but give thanks to the loved ones who have chosen to look beyond the injuries and continue to dignify their veterans with the honor and respect they deserve.



## **I AM A BLUE STAR MOTHER.**

I am the mother of a soldier in the  
United States Army.

He gave me my title.

I will give him a heart full of wonder  
at his accomplishments and a voice  
that praises his desire to serve.

I will place my faith in his military  
training and in God's protection.

I will give him the prayers that will  
follow him where I cannot.

I will be strong when I want to cry and  
brave when I want to cower.

He will know I am behind him every  
step of the way, because I bear the  
title of

**Mother of a United States Soldier.**



On average, more than 1,400 U.S. servicemembers on active duty died each year [between 1980 and 2022](#). Each death is a sudden and painful loss for their family members. Survivors of those who succumb to service-connected injury or illness face the same tragic reality.

# The Gold Star Story

## What is a Gold Star Family?

Gold Star Family members who lost loved ones are Gold Star Family... a designation no one aspires to.

The Gold Star family has experienced the loss of a loved one—an immediate family member – who died as the result of active-duty military service. Those who die in service to their country leave behind parents, siblings, spouses, children, and extended families. These are recognized as Gold Star families. The title is meant to honor the service member's ultimate sacrifice while acknowledging their family's loss, grief, and continued healing.

According to a 2019 [Military Times](#) article, since 9/11, more than 16,000 troops have died in non-combat circumstances, and more than 7,000 died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars alone. There are also thousands of living Gold Stars families from both World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and other conflicts.

Even though the nation isn't currently part of an all-encompassing conflict like a World War, over 1.3 million people are involved in the military today, so you may know a family that still grieves a recent fallen soldier. Understanding the sacrifice and acknowledging the holidays designated to remember are the best ways to support the families and honor the soldiers. To honor all Gold Star Families, here is a look at the history and significance of this somber designation.

*The History of the Gold Star Family Designation*

*The term Gold Star family is a modern reference that comes from the Service Flag. These flags/banners were first flown by families during World War I. The flag included a blue star for every immediate family member serving in the armed forces of the United States during any period of war or hostilities in which the armed forces of the United States were engaged. " But in the event of a death, that blue star is replaced with a gold variant — the highest honor.*

Often referred to as “an honor no one wants,” the Gold Star symbol took root during World War I, when families hung banners with blue stars representing loved ones in service. The star was changed from blue to gold if the servicemember died while at war, allowing the nation to pay tribute to the sacrifices of these families. There is no legal definition of “Gold Star” in statute. DoD issues a [Gold Star Lapel Button](#) to the next of kin of a servicemember who lost his or her life (see [DoD Instruction 1348.36](#) for additional details). Unfortunately, the DoD instruction leaves out many thousands of survivors whose servicemember died outside of combat – in a helicopter crash during a training event, for example – as well as those who lost a servicemember due to an injury or illness sustained while in uniform or from invisible wounds that led to suicide.

MOAA has endorsed efforts led by the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), urging Congress to pass legislation establishing a definition in statute for “Gold Star” as it relates to families of servicemembers and veterans who have “died while serving or from a service-connected injury or illness.”

A recent letter to congressional leaders on the issue highlights the challenges that have arisen from the lack of a legal, consistent definition, with the result often being the unintentional exclusion of some survivors. More than 50 organizations joined MOAA in support of this letter.

An inclusive definition of “Gold Star” recognizes the casualties of war that don't fit neatly into the “hostile engagement” category:



The Silver Star banner doesn't denote a Silver Star medal recipient. It represents the recognition of those who have been wounded, sickened, or killed in combat. In May 2010, Congress passed a resolution to formally recognize May 1<sup>st</sup> as the "Official Day to honor wounded, ill, and injured veterans." Officially known as Silver Star Service Banner Day.

Since the beginning of human conflict, the true extent of battle scars has only been visible to the injured. Despite having access to the most advanced and sophisticated medical treatments in the world, some injuries can elude the brightest minds. The Silver Star Service banner is unique because earning the right to display the banner may occur four months to 40 years after departing the war zone. No drop of blood ever shed, no Purple Heart ever awarded, is a prerequisite.

Military families have always kept a soft glow illuminating the home as a gentle reminder of the warmth, peace, and love awaiting their service members. Long after the battles and wars are over, peace has been declared. Families of military members injured in combat, either physically or mentally, continue to mend the wounds.

During America's early wars, military members who were shot in the limbs likely had to have their limbs amputated. Horrifically, many

Survivors in each of these scenarios face unimaginable difficulties, just like family members whose servicemembers are lost at war.

amputations were performed with little to no anesthetic agents or pain medicine. Those who lost limbs but were lucky to survive infections faced lifelong struggles. Up until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, prosthetics were archaic and painful to wear for extended periods. Returning amputee veterans faced difficult challenges in an era when most jobs required grueling manual labor. Putting food on the table and supporting a family was only made possible by pain, sacrifices, and determination.

Advancements in the medical field have yielded positive results in maintaining a good quality of life for wounded warriors, including amputees. Prosthetics have enabled double amputees to become marathon runners. Injured veterans and their families are fortunate to receive help from many generous organizations to ease the burdens of some physical limitations stemming from combat injuries.

As the physical treatment of military men and women has vastly improved, it is the invisible war wounds that have emerged from the shadows, especially in the last 40 years. Chemical agents such as Agent Orange are still claiming victims from the Vietnam War. Gulf War Syndrome has yet to be attributed to any single source but is thought to have been caused by chemical warfare agents, still unidentified. The symptoms are referred to as "chronic multi-symptom illness." Lastly, the longest, most

prevalent, silent war wound is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

It is an invisible battle of injuries that often don't appear for years, even decades. Military families breathe a deep sigh of relief when their loved ones finish their last tour of duty or celebrate their final homecoming. There is a triumphant feeling. The ribbons, medals, and awards are proudly displayed. The military life that once dominated eventually fades into a distant memory.

The invisible wounds may suddenly appear or slowly develop over time. The injuries aren't identified as quickly as physical combat wounds. Family members often assume the role of battlefield medics, with little to no training or advanced notice.

Of all the war wounds, PTSD is the most challenging injury for families to treat and nurture. It is the wound that can be contagious to loved ones, despite never witnessing war. It

can turn veterans into prisoners of war, decades after the war ended. It is an insidious combat wound, and innocuous to the naked eye.

PTSD is one of the most common injuries in the military today. It didn't suddenly develop in the, some experienced horrors no civilian could imagine and were locked away in institutions as a result. They were casualties of war but never received the honors they deserved on behalf of a grateful nation.

It is essential to recognize, honor, and appreciate the devotion of injured veterans to their country and loved ones. They have displayed immeasurable perseverance despite insurmountable odds. Warfighting, weaponry, military vehicles, enemies, and uniforms have changed many times, but the mainstay is 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are historic accounts of veterans reaching as far back as the Revolutionary War who suffered severely from PTSD. Sadly, veterans' commitment to serve their country, community, and loved ones, injury or no injury.



## STATELY NEWS



"Welcome, citizens, to the [ALA Alaska Girls State](#) session! Behind every great city, legislative session, and campaign this week is an incredible team of leaders. It is my honor to introduce your ALA Alaska Girls State Counselors. These dedicated women are volunteers, community leaders, and program alumnae who have stepped up to mentor you. They are here to guide your mock campaigns, clarify parliamentary procedures, and support your journey toward civic leadership. Please join me in giving a warm Alaskan welcome to your counselors

*City Of Williamson (Counselor) Mia Howard is a passionate educator excited to serve at Girl's State this year. Mia spent 20 years as a floor nurse in various clinical settings before earning her master's in nursing education in 2020. She now teaches full-time at the University of Alaska. A Utah native, Mia moved to*

Alaska three years ago with her husband and four children. When she is not teaching, she loves exploring her home state through fishing, kayaking, and hiking.

**City of Williamson (Assistant Counselor) Mary Scaturchio** is a Fairbanks, Alaska native, medical professional, and active American Legion Auxiliary (Post 57) member. Since joining the ALA in 2016, she has dedicated three years to the ALA Girls State program and actively volunteers throughout her community. Mary balances her healthcare career with raising two boys—a son entering middle school and a nephew entering high school. In her free time, she enjoys coaching, playing sports, and traveling.

**City Of Caswell (Counselor) Cleopatra Hilliard** is a 26-year-old United States Army Supply Sergeant originally from Zambia, Africa, and currently residing in Jefferson City, Missouri. A proud military spouse and mother of three, Cleopatra balances her service with a passion for youth leadership, having served as both a member and counselor for Girls State. In her free time, she is an avid marathon runner, gardener, and crafter who enjoys spending time with her family and Goldendoodle, Juno.



## ALA Girl State Caswell-Williamson Daily Newsletter

**Bella Marsh**  
**Cabin Williamson**  
**Tuesday, June 2nd**  
**ALA Newsletter**

**Tuesday the 2nd of June at ALA Alaska Girls State was a total success! At the cabin of Williamson, we are early birds. Up by quarter to 6 we made our beds and got ready for the day that started at 7:50. City session involved discussion about the formulation of Caswell-Williamson's urban and suburban living, motos, and emblems. During lunch I had the privilege of sitting down with assembly member Deedee McGee and her son, Chief of Staff to Senator Rob Yundt, conducts an official ALA Girls State podcast episode! Beyond the city and our honorable guests, we dove into the realm of Party Caucuses, exploring within my party, the nationalists, our core values and plank statements. To end the day, we observed a traditional retirement of 27 flags with veteran Jason Porter and a legislative session, learning the flow of parliamentary procedure.**

Georgia DeBaun  
City Report  
June 2nd, 2026

Today at ALA Alaska Girl's State we woke up around 7:15am when Mia Collom, our town

crier, woke everyone up. Then we had pancakes for breakfast and went into our first City Meeting of the day. There, I, as mayor, went over city ordinances such as shower times and lights out with the citizens, soon after we had work time and did a workshop on speech. At lunch we had Assembly Woman Deedee McGee come in and talk to the citizens about her experience in politics and government. Her insight was powerful, giving an experience-filled view into the world of government. Soon after, we practiced debating and had Party Platform Meetings to discuss what each party would be representing. We had a fettuccine alfredo dinner next, right before we went into our first Legislative Session, where we inducted Grace Acker as President, Mia Collom as Chief Clerk, Isabella Marsh as Assistant Clerk, and Sarah Dallaire as Seargent-at-arms. From there, we quickly moved into the retiring of flags, where we retired about 28 flags. We then concluded our senate meeting by appointing committees for each senator. We ended our night with a service project for our military and veterans before preparing for bed. Overall, this was a day full of learning experiences, new relationships, debates, and meetings that I think has prepared each citizen for a prosperous week at ALA Alaska Girl's State.