


For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served & Died

TAPS[®]

VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 2

MAGAZINE



OUR Family
REUNION

PAGE **20**

Active
Remembering

PAGE **6**

When Does the
Hurt Go Away?

PAGE **26**

The Unstuck Approach

PAGE **30**

TABLE OF Contents

help

- 6** Active Remembering
By Allison Gilbert
Stay connected to your loved one.
- 24** It Takes a Tribe
By Shauna Springer
Peer support can make all the difference.
- 30** The Unstuck Approach
By Dr. James Gordon
Fight depression with a holistic view.
- 34** Talking to Children About Suicide
By Kim Ruocco
Be open about suicide loss with children.

hope

- 8** Making the Trip
By Kelly Griffith
Bring your TAPS family with you on the journey.
- 10** Let it R.A.I.N.
By Heather Stang
Find your calm in the storm through self-care.
- 26** When Does the Hurt Go Away?
By Artis Henderson
Time helps us heal, but there is no timeline.

healing

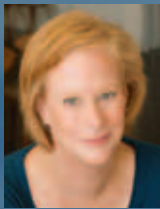
- 12** Discovering a New Plan
By R. Glenn Kelly
Recognize the pain of losing your old plan to create something new.
- 32** Climbing Mountains
By Peggy Ligouri
Move to new heights on your journey, one step at a time.



Contributors

departments

- 4 Letter from TAPS
- 5 Letter to TAPS
- 14 Recipes of Remembrance
- 18 From the Sports Desk
America's pastime honors America's Family.
- 20 Our Family Reunion
TAPS comes together over Memorial Day.
- 29 Join Your TAPS Family
Check out some exciting TAPS events coming up in 2017.
- 36 Grief Resource Library
Dr. Cheryl Kreutter offers summer reading for children.
- 38 Spotlight on Service
Joe Quenga transforms his grief through volunteering.
- 39 Friends of TAPS
Corporate volunteers at NMSS



Allison Gilbert is one of the most thought-provoking and influential writers on grief and resilience. The author of numerous books including the groundbreaking, "Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive," her stirring work exposes the secret and essential factor for harnessing loss to drive happiness and rebound from adversity. www.allisongilbert.com



Kelly Griffith is the *TAPS Magazine* Editor and Manager of Internal Communications and the surviving sister of Marine Corps Maj. Samuel Griffith. Kelly's background in journalism and the profound impact of Sam's life and service enable her to share the compassion and care of TAPS through writing.



R. Glenn Kelly public speaker and author of multiple award-winning bereavement support books, lost his teenage son and only child to a congenital heart defect. Today, he appears on television and radio, universities, businesses, grief support conferences and more, to discuss his noted understanding of the male versus female grieving process.



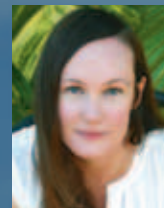
Peggy Carvill-Liguori is retired Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician and graduate of New York Chiropractic College. She is the surviving sister of her older brother Staff Sgt. Frank T. Carvill and younger brother Mike Carvill. She strives to live up to the motto of the TAPS Inner Warrior, "Our lives will be our tribute, stronger every day."



Shauna Springer, Ph.D. is the Senior Advisor of Suicide Prevention for TAPS. She has particular expertise in attachment processes, trauma recovery, innovative suicide prevention approaches, relationship counseling, peer support program development and Veterans' issues, including post-discharge adjustment and strategies for engaging Veterans in behavioral health care.



James Gordon, M.D. a Harvard educated psychiatrist, is a world-renowned expert in using mind-body medicine to heal depression, anxiety and psychological trauma. He is the Founder and Executive Director of The Center for Mind-Body Medicine and a Clinical Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Family Medicine at Georgetown Medical School.



Artis Henderson is the author of "Unremarried Widow," a *New York Times* Editors' Choice named to more than 10 Best of the Year lists. She is a graduate of the Columbia School of Journalism.



Cheryl Kreutter, Ph.D. holds her degree in Reading/Literacy and is on the faculty of SUNY Geneseo in Upstate New York. Through her teaching and research, she advocates journaling and book discussion to gain insights about oneself and others. She is the surviving parent of Navy Lt. Jason P. Kreutter.



Kim Ruocco, MSW is TAPS Chief External Relations Officer for Suicide Prevention and Postvention, partnering with private and public organizations to decrease suicide and increase postvention care for all those grieving the suicide of a loved one. She is the surviving spouse of Marine Maj. John Ruocco, who died by suicide in 2005.



Heather Stang is the author of *Mindfulness and Grief*, and facilitates the online companion program, Transform Your Life After Loss with Meditation, Movement and Journaling. She holds a Master's Degree in Thanatology and is a Certified Yoga Therapist. Heather is the founder of the Frederick Meditation Center and runs MindfulnessAndGrief.com.

On the Cover

An Old Guard Sentinel walks the TAPS wreath to the Tomb of the Unknowns on Memorial Day 2017.

LETTER FROM

Bonnie Carroll



Dear TAPS Family,

Welcome to our TAPS magazine, the publication written by you - caring military survivors - and for you - by the wonderful grief and trauma experts who support us. Our authors have lovingly created this issue with the goal of providing a hug through the mail, resources that you can use, and insights that will offer you hope.

The theme of TAPS is "remember the love, celebrate the life, share the journey," and that's exactly what we hope our magazine offers you. It is our place to share stories, offer insights, learn coping strategies, honor our heroes, and share this journey through grief with a newfound family who understands because they are walking this road with you.

What brings us together may be the fact that someone we love has died, but far more important than that, we are here in this family because someone we love lived a life of selfless service to our nation, and that love goes on, and that life is forever remembered.

No matter how or where they died, our loved ones are our heroes, they are precious to us, and we know that our relationship with them transcends the physical and goes on now forever in our hearts.

In coming together with your family at TAPS, whether through the pages of this magazine, or at one of our events or in an online chat, TAPS is there for you with loving care. It's our safe space, and we are so grateful you have found your way here.

You are forever family, and we are here for you.

With love,

Bonnie Carroll

TAPS

3033 Wilson Blvd., Suite 630
Arlington, VA 22201

Editor in Chief: Kelly Griffith

Editorial Board:

Bonnie Carroll, Lalaine Estella,
Kyle Harper and Emily Muñoz

Art Director: Jennifer Bonney

Photography Team:

Erika Edwards, Chelsea Marlow,
Steve Maloney and Jackie Ross

Email: editor@taps.org

Website: www.taps.org

**Please send subscription requests and
address changes to:** info@taps.org

TAPS is here

24 HOURS A DAY / 7 DAYS A WEEK

- ★ The National Military Survivor Helpline
- ★ National Peer Support Network
- ★ Quarterly *TAPS Magazine*
- ★ Connections to Local Grief Support
 - ★ Casework Assistance
 - ★ Education Support Services
 - ★ TAPS Online Community
 - ★ Grief Education Materials
- ★ Survivor Seminars and Retreats
- ★ Good Grief Camps for Children

Copyright © 2017 by TAPS, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part prohibited without authorization. All articles appearing in this magazine, unless copyrighted by others, remain copyrighted materials of TAPS. TAPS uses the AP style guide for this publication.



and **TAPS** are

Registered U.S. Trademarks. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

Letters TO TAPS

Finding a Better Self

Since I began serving as a TAPS Good Grief Camp Mentor in 2013, I have grown tremendously as a person. It's not just a matter of feeling better, TAPS helps me be better. My experience with TAPS has made me a better husband, father, Soldier and leader. Sitting patiently with someone as they experience their own distinct grief process required me to grow - to become more than I was before. It is not easy to recognize and accept the emotional depth of another human being, but it is well worth it. After every TAPS Good Grief Camp, I feel better about who I am, and how I have contributed to this world. There's nothing I've done in 21 years of service that has given me such a feeling of accomplishment as serving as a TAPS Mentor. There truly is no better way to honor our fallen than to offer love and healing to their loved ones.

Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steve Downs,
Bavaria, Germany,
TAPS Good Grief Camp Mentor

Gaining a Sister

I lost my little brother and best friend in January 2016. My life shattered into pieces the night two soldiers came to my doorstep. Everything was a blur. TAPS reached out and asked if I would like to talk to another surviving sister. At first, I was hesitant; it wasn't going to bring my brother back. But, I'm happy I said yes. My peer mentor Carly saved my life. She knew exactly how I felt and what I was going through. There were days and nights I couldn't have gotten through without her. She has been a rock for me, and it feels like she is the only person in my life who understands my pain. She is my sister. She is part of my family, and I am part of hers. Thank you, TAPS, for being there for my family and me as well as all surviving sisters and families across the world.

Amanda Klager, New York
Surviving sister of
Army Spc. Adam Klagerr



Leaning on My Family

This June marked 12 years since Lou died, and I have been raising our four boys all alone. I love being their mom, and wouldn't trade that for anything, but it is exhausting to always be the one who has to figure everything out - to see the boys suffer for my mistakes and when I collapse in self-pity. And then someone comes along to remind me I am not as alone as I feel. On several occasions, this has been TAPS, and now you've done it again. Helping Trevor prepare for college is a happy but sad time as well, knowing I will miss him and feeling the sting of Lou not being here to see this. On top of my other responsibilities, dealing with DFAS and Trevor's continued dependency was frustrating and depressing. And then TAPS came to my rescue. Thank you for all you do for our families.

Barb Allen, New York
Surviving spouse of
Army National Guard 1st Lt. Louis Allen

Discovering Peace

We just arrived home, and I'm decompressing a little from our beautiful and emotional TAPS experience. I just want to thank you for organizing our trip to the Afghan Embassy during the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. It was truly one of the highlights for me and also for my daughter Jojo. To be invited into the ambassador's home and be received so graciously by his family was deeply moving and also a lot of fun. There were, of course, so many layers of meaning for us, but I just want to thank you for facilitating a deeply meaningful cultural interaction. Seeing the TAPS children play together with the Afghan children said it all.

Carol Kruize, Hawaii
Surviving stepmother of
Army Spc. Brian Tabada

Please email your Letter to TAPS to editor@taps.org.

Active Remembering

By Allison Gilbert

Author of "Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive"

If you're fortunate, like me, soon after your loved one dies, a swarm of friends will embrace you in all sorts of meaningful ways. They'll pack the funeral home, attend the wake or shiva, and a few may even leave homemade meals wrapped in tin foil by your front door so you won't have to cook for a while. Rituals surrounding loss tend to kick into gear automatically, and I benefited from being the passive recipient of support when each of my parents passed away. Yet, my greatest fortune ultimately caused me the most pain.

Simply put, transitioning from passive mourning to active remembering is key to building resilience after loss. I got used to support just being there. In those first few awful days and weeks after my parents died, I didn't have to work hard to find a friend to talk with about my mom or dad. But consider the vacuum that happens later. Five years later, 10, 15 – those conversations often didn't occur without effort. That silence was one of the hardest and unexpected post-loss blows. I also felt paralyzed and choked by my parents' belongings. What should I do with my father's collection of neckties and my mother's colorful assortment of scarves? A mountain of bric-a-brac moved with me from home to home, following me around like Pig-Pen's dirt cloud. At times, my sadness and isolation seemed inescapable until I figured out what I needed to do: I had to approach remembering my loved ones



Recognizing and accepting the task of proactive remembering is critical for driving our capacity to rebound from adversity, especially the deaths of family and friends we miss most.

the same way I'd pursue finding a new job or buying a car. It was up to me to take control. I needed to shift from being passive to being proactive.

So, I brought my parents up in conversation. Over dinner with my children, I'd nonchalantly, but very much intentionally, recall an anecdote about Grandma or Grandpa that seemed germane to whatever we were discussing. I also began to cook a few reminiscent foods, frame unusual objects like passports

and business cards to spark even more discussion, and plan a small number of outings to the neighborhoods where my parents grew up and the offices they worked. I ditched, donated and gifted many of their possessions and transformed others so they could bring me joy. I got help turning my father's neckties into a quilt and my mother's scarves into a chuppah, the Jewish wedding canopy, under which I got married. Yes, these activities required some planning. But they made me stronger and happier.

For a long time, I couldn't articulate why I'd struggled so deeply years after my parents died and I couldn't find words for what helped me heal.

It turns out, I failed to take ownership of keeping their memory alive. Grief experts like J. William Worden and Therese Rando have long argued that sustaining connections with loved ones is essential

for moving forward. I had to crack these opportunities open. It was up to me to help my children appreciate the maternal grandparents they never got to know.

Recognizing and accepting the task of proactive remembering is critical for driving our capacity to rebound from adversity, especially the deaths of family and friends we miss most. If I had learned this lesson earlier, I would have leapfrogged years of heartache. *

Gilbert's "Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive" is the first book to reveal 85 imaginative ways to celebrate and honor the family and friends we never want to forget. She calls her ideas Forget Me Nots. Some involve planning and patience; others require hardly any effort at all. A few entail spending money; most cost nothing. Gilbert's hope is that every Forget Me Not gently stretches how you think about loss—that absence and presence can coexist and that moving forward doesn't have to mean leaving your loved one behind.

Here, Gilbert offers a few more Forget-Me-Nots to the TAPS family:

HOST A MEMORY BASH

A Memory Bash is an excuse to get together as a group — eating, drinking and having a good time — while celebrating loved ones who have passed away in the company of others drawn to do the same. While Gilbert hosts Memory Bash events all over the country at community centers, houses of worship, hospices and funeral homes, you can easily design your own celebration. Families learn how to preserve a loved one's handwriting, favorite words and most reminiscent recipes. They'll share stories about their loved ones and what made them so special. Family members can even write a note of remembrance to be included in an international commemorative project.

Visit Gilbert's website to learn more: www.allisongilbert.com. You can also email Gilbert at allisongilbert@allisongilbert.com to receive a free copy of "How to Host a Memory Bash" guide.

GET THE WHITE GLOVE TREATMENT

This is another great opportunity to make remembering an uplifting, social experience. First, go to LegacyRepublic.com to find a Legacy Maker, a representative who comes to your home to make one-stop shopping out of digitizing film, video, photos, slides, even entire scrapbooks and albums. Second, invite neighbors over, encouraging them to bring their cherished photos and videos. Guests nibble on snacks and hang out while the consultant peels them off one by one to discuss their individual needs and place their orders. Legacy Republic provides each participant with a link to a private online account where all their information is stored. Video can be easily uploaded to Facebook.

Find a Legacy Maker by visiting legacyrepublic.com.

PUT THE "SOCIAL" IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Post a picture of your loved one, but don't stop there. Ask your friends and family to share their photos and remembrances, too. This digital back and forth accomplishes two distinct goals. First, it enables you to read stories about your loved one you may never have heard before. And second, it keeps the person you miss most forever contemporary and present in your life.

PLANT DAFFODIL BULBS

Plant one daffodil bulb for every year your loved one lived. Daffodils are the perfect flower for such a happiness-inducing project: as perennials, they'll come back spring after spring—and they're virtually indestructible. This is a great activity to involve friends, family and neighbors. Not only will you benefit from the extra hands, you'll be able to use the time to invite conversation and share stories about your loved one as well.

Inching along at a pace so slow that I was sure slugs would cross the American Legion Memorial Bridge, my mood went to a dangerous place – one where I could hear sirens in my head warning that an emotional meltdown was imminent. I was sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic at the Virginia/Maryland border. The windows were rolled down instead of using air conditioning, letting the 100+ degree summer air spill into the car and making my skin hot and sticky.

After sitting on the bridge for so long, the road ahead and Potomac River to my left and right no longer looked familiar. And I began to panic. I learned to drive in the era before smartphones but after print maps had started to dwindle and no longer spilled out of the glove compartment – it was the time of the perpetually lost.

We're traveling a road we've never been down before. Or maybe the road is the same, but it took a sharp turn and nothing looks the same.

So, I did the only thing I could think of; I picked up my cell phone and called my dad. Surely, he would be my guide. I couldn't tell him exactly where I was; I could only say I thought I was still going north on I-95. Maybe. Or was it 495? The highway numbers ran together in my head, and my breath began to quicken, making me even hotter. Unable to read my mind and without the magic mirror from "Beauty and the Beast," my dad couldn't help my nerves. So, I sat in traffic – tears streaming down my face – and made the decision then and there I would never again get behind the wheel without a map or a GPS to guide me.

Years later, after my brother Sam died, I once again felt myself in need of a GPS. I had lost direction. I felt completely lost in a world where others just seemed to zoom by so fast it made my head spin. I was completely overwhelmed.

TAPS was that GPS I so desperately needed, and I've seen others experience it too. We're traveling a road we've never been down before. Or maybe the road is the same, but it took a sharp turn and nothing looks the same. The unfamiliar sights, sounds, feelings catch us off guard. We feel totally alone, and for many of us, totally afraid. And suddenly,

Making the TRIP

By Kelly Griffith

Surviving Sister of Maj. Samuel Griffith





Whatever your journey looks like, and wherever it takes you, bring your TAPS family along for the ride.

there's a soft voice telling us we have the option to turn right 1,000 feet ahead to help us get closer to our destination of healing. There's a sense of calm that comes over us as we look ahead those 1,000 feet, and it allows us to see if we actually want to make that right turn.

And what if we want to turn left? Or stay straight? That's okay too. We can find comfort in knowing that voice will be there to recalculate right along with us, even if we don't choose the same path as someone else.

This summer, I am headed out on a new journey towards healing, feeling the love and support of my TAPS family. Life is taking new turns, and I'm working on living the life I know Sam would want for me. I hope you will make your own travel plans with TAPS at your side.

Maybe you need to make a stop with TAPS Community Based Care to find local grief resources. Maybe you need to feel the wind in your hair and experience a little excitement on a TAPS Retreat or Expedition. Maybe you need to find ways to refuel your life with TAPS Inner Warrior. Whatever your journey looks like, and wherever it takes you, bring your TAPS family along for the ride.

Turn on a song that reminds you of a sweet memory, and grab some healthy snacks before you head out. Share a conversation with a trusted friend you've found in your peer mentor. And find a little peace and comfort with TAPS as you take in the journey. ✨

hope

LET IT R.A.I.N.

By Heather Stang | Author of "Mindfulness and Grief"

As a child, I dreaded overcast days, especially during the summer. Even when it wasn't raining, the threat of precipitation felt like a life sentence with no chance of parole. It was the grey skies I feared, even though they would often lead to bluer skies and sometimes a rainbow.

Living in emotional pain is a lot like bad weather. There is no control, no predicting when the clouds will come or when the rain will start. But we can learn to relate to our pain differently, softening our resistance and recognizing it as something other than the enemy.

Pain is a signal that we need emotional, physical or spiritual care. And our normal reaction is to try and ignore it, either to be "strong" or in hopes that it will just go away. Somehow, we instinctively feel that ignoring will somehow make it hurt less. Oftentimes, emotional pain that comes with grief can be overwhelming, and we usually have no idea how to tend to our difficult feelings.

While avoiding and numbing might bring short-term relief, one researcher quipped, "Emotions that are ignored just go down into the basement to lift weights." When we resist unavoidable pain, we just cause more. Have you ever tried to suppress your tears, or pretend you're happy when you aren't? Even if it feels better in the moment, it will come back. The pressure of pretending will add to your sadness, and make everything worse.

One of the most useful self-care techniques I know is called R.A.I.N., based on four steps to bring about mindfulness. Meditation teacher Tara Brach explains in her book, "True Refuge," that R.A.I.N. allows us to "direct our attention in a clear, systematic way that cuts through confusion and stress."

When we are faced with pain and unsure what to do, this step-by-step process encourages self-kindness and compassion that can reduce fear, bringing us stability and eventually more long term relief.

HOW TO PRACTICE R.A.I.N.

R.A.I.N. can be practiced as a planned, seated meditation or whenever a difficult emotion arises during daily life. The first time you practice R.A.I.N., try it out on a mild frustration or irritation. If you're concerned the practice may become overwhelming, try it with a friend or in a group.

RECOGNIZE What You're Feeling

Initially, we must recognize that we are suffering - simply naming the difficult emotion is crucial. Speaking silently to yourself, acknowledge your feeling with words. "Sadness, sadness." Or, "Anger, anger." Or, "Guilt, guilt." Keep your tone soft and gentle as you validate your truth with kindness, rather than ridicule or judgment.

ALLOW the Feeling to Unfold

Our natural human tendency is to either run away or become overwhelmed by difficult emotions. We must choose to experience the feeling and allow it to unfold naturally - not trying to fix, change or adjust it. You have to allow yourself to experience pain. You are in pain because you have lived and loved. That's what pain means. Try to remember that pain is not the enemy, but a representation of something beautiful you had.

This radical act of self-compassion allows us to loosen our resistance and soften into our truth.

INVESTIGATE the Emotion with Kindness

How do we face the truth of suffering without becoming overwhelmed? We add in the element of mindfulness - using our senses rather than our thinking mind to investigate our experience.

Instead of fixating on what triggered your emotion, observe how the emotion is manifesting.

Investigate the emotion. Notice the physical properties of the emotion. Where do you feel the emotion in your body?

Take time to treat yourself as a beloved friend, whether you choose to simply offer yourself words of kindness, pray, reach out to a TAPS Peer Mentor or embark on a self-care journey.

How much space does the emotion take up? What is its shape? Does it feel hot, or cold, or somewhere in between? If it had a color, what color would it be? Is it solid or spacious? Does it throb, pulse or move, or is it resting and still?

Investigate your body. Connect with your breath, allowing your inhales and exhales to come and go naturally. What is happening in the rest of your body? If you felt the difficult emotion in your chest, notice the sensations in your arms, legs, back and shoulders, and face. When you find areas that are tense, see if you can consciously relax them a little.

Investigate your body as a whole. Feel the sensation of your whole body, including the area of strong emotion. Simultaneously, feel the sensation of your breath.


NON-IDENTIFICATION Nourish with Self-compassion

Mindfulness teacher Sharon Salzberg explains in "Real Happiness" that non-identification is acknowledging that what "you're feeling today isn't your whole resume, the final word on who you are and who you're going to be. Instead of confusing a temporary state with your total self, you come to see that your emotions arise, last a while and then disappear. You feel some fear, and then you don't. You're resentful, and then you aren't."

Also, nurture yourself with self-compassion and self-care.

Ask yourself what you need. And then give yourself the answer. Take time to treat yourself as a beloved friend, whether you choose to simply offer yourself words of kindness, pray, reach out to a TAPS Peer Mentor or embark on a self care journey. There is no right or wrong, as long as you are being kind and true to yourself.

There is no fix to pain, but working through it is a process. Try to let go and go through it when you are ready. After the rain, there can be occasional blue skies *



*Remember the love,
Celebrate the life,
Share the journey*

Try R.A.I.N. Visit mindfulnessandgrief.com/grief-emotions.

DISCOVERING *a new* PLAN



By R. Glenn Kelly
Surviving father of Jonathan Kelly

Almost as if spring were just a dream, summer is upon us, and we find ourselves in shorts, t-shirts and sandals, darting to and from air-conditioned spaces.

Summer also brings another transition point for me after the traumatic loss of a child. In summer 2013, I lost my son and only child, Jonathan, when his heart failed during a relatively simple surgery. To me, summer will always be a reminder of the plans I had that were erased in an instant and the new normal of my life now.

Like every parent who has lost a child, I grieved my son's death. I was greatly saddened by the life he would never get to experience. Although I could look back over his life and take solace in the incredibly happy childhood he lived, there was so much more to life he had not yet encountered. I am saddened beyond measure he won't get the chance to live those parts of life. Without question, the majority of my great sorrow is for my child.

Yet, while it is not often discussed, I also had to face that there is a great deal of mourning to be done for myself as well.

I had to openly admit that while I feel incredible sorrow for what was denied my son – something incredible, anticipated, natural, normal and instinctual – was taken from me too.

While many men may think this, we don't often speak it aloud for fear of seeming insensitive and self-centered. I had to openly admit that while I feel incredible sorrow for what was denied my son – something incredible, anticipated, natural, normal and instinctual – was taken from me too. And it was taken without my consent. Not only against my will, but also against the presupposed plan I had for my life as a parent.

We may never completely heal from our loss, but to continue the journey towards healing, we must look inward and recognize that part of our loss is just that – Our Loss. Pain must be given credence, even if it seems selfish to consider it. Deep inside, even at that place where the unconditional love for my son resides, I had to recognize that something had been taken from me. I had a plan for my life that was completely erased without my consent. I expected to father a child, and then teach, nurture and mentor that person until he could stand on his own, only to leave this world myself, content that my legacy would continue on. But now, I have found purpose in carrying on the legacy of Jonathan.

Summer also brings another transition point for me after the traumatic loss of a child. In summer 2013, I lost my son and only child, Jonathan, when his heart failed during a relatively simple surgery. To me, summer will always be a reminder of the plans I had that were erased in an instant and the new normal of my life now.

This summer, I hope you will allow yourself to find a time of reawakening. I encourage you to take time to recognize the pains of losing your old plan. Even if repressed emotions have moved into the subconscious, recognition can be as healing as the summer sun to flora and fauna. It may take time; don't beat yourself up. If emotions act on your behalf without conscious effort or control, be mindful to recognize them each time. As you do, they will slowly become

conscious thoughts, where healing through grief can be like that of the warm sun, reawakening life from what was once dormant and barren.

My once coveted life plan is no more, and there is a new normal in its place. But, I believe, in this journey towards healing, a new normal is one where I can once again live a life of purpose, all while carrying the unconditional love of my son with me. ☆





our Compliments to the Chef

Ten-year-old Carlee Goble has been a fan of the Food Network show “Restaurant: Impossible” for years. When she found out that the host of the show, chef Robert Irvine, would be preparing dinner at the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar, she couldn’t wait to finally taste a meal made by her favorite TV chef.

Irvine and a team of active duty military chefs prepared a fabulous meal of upland cress and beet salad, braised beef short rib and a dark chocolate budino for TAPS families, supporters and dignitaries. After dinner, Carlee and her mom, Angelina Lester, stood in line patiently waiting to get a photo with the celebrity chef.

“Where have you been?” Irvine said when he caught a glimpse of Carlee in line. He made his way to her as if they were old friends. She came up to him and introduced herself, and told him that she was a big fan. She had even included him in a class project about her future career as a chef.

Carlee repeated to Irvine his top qualities of a restaurant owner and manager that

she learned from watching his show: leadership, attitude, flexibility and efficiency.

And then, she won his heart. Irvine invited Carlee and her mom to join him on the TAPS Memorial Day float for the national parade in Washington, DC.

"Carlee's journey is the epitome of what TAPS is all about. I met this shy, quiet 10 year old over Memorial Day weekend, and already she is family. It is truly profound to realize what the TAPS organization has done to help her find healing," Chef Irvine said. "Gail and I smile when we think of TAPS and the great connection we've made with

Carlee and her family." ~ ROBERT IRVINE

“He made her feel like the celebrity,” Lester said. “I loved seeing chef Irvine interact with my girl.”

Carlee shared with folks how her father, Army veteran Jason Lester loved watching chef Irvine on TV. She bravely shared how he died by suicide last year, and how TAPS has helped her with her loss. Her father would have loved seeing Carlee befriend his idol, her mom said.

“I was proud of her,” Angelina Lester said. “I heard her in a voice I’d never heard before.”

Later that evening, Carlee mentioned to the chef that she had less than stellar meatballs at a hotel restaurant. Chef Irvine promptly took her and disappeared into the back hotel kitchen where he taught her to make her own meatballs.

A few days after returning home from the Memorial weekend events with TAPS, Irvine and his wife Gail called the Lester family at home to check in on them.

“When I saw his phone number come up on the caller ID, my first thought was: Jason would not believe this,” Angelina Lester said. “It makes me smile thinking about Jason telling everyone in Heaven, ‘Guess who my family just talked to on the phone... at my house.’”

These days, as chef Irvine travels around the world in support of military families, he and Carlee maintain their friendship via regular phone calls and Skype sessions.

A Bright Morning

Submitted by
Angelina Lester in honor of
Army Veteran Jason Lester

This recipe means a lot to us because it was the first breakfast he ever made for me, and it was the first recipe he ever taught my daughter Carlee. I swear she can recreate this perfectly. Our family could write a cookbook with all of Jason's amazing recipes - there are tons. But this will always be one of our favorites. This is really good with Jason's fresh fruit syrup, and it's especially perfect for a summer breakfast.

Jason's Vanilla French Toast

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES | COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Ingredients

- 8 slices of brioche bread
(Texas toast, or another thick bread could be substituted)
- 5 eggs, beaten slightly
- 1 1/2 cups of milk
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 Tbsp. vanilla bean paste
(2 tsp. vanilla extract could be substituted, but won't have the "pop" that comes from the paste)
- 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1/2 Tbsp. white sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- Real butter (for greasing pan)
- Powdered sugar (for garnish)

Method

- In a shallow pan (we use a cake pan) lay all slices of bread out in a single layer.
- In a separate mixing bowl, add all of the ingredients (except the butter and powdered sugar) and whisk until well blended. Once mixed, pour the mixture over the bread and let stand a couple minutes to let bread



absorb the mixture. Turn the slices over, allowing them to sit another minute or two to absorb rest of mixture and have good liquid coating on both sides.

- Preheat a large skillet over medium heat and coat generously with butter. When the skillet is hot, cook the bread in batches (a couple slices at a time) until golden and crisp, about 3 minutes per side.
- Plate slices, garnish lightly with powdered sugar and serve with real maple syrup, or homemade raspberry and peach syrup for a great Summer morning breakfast or brunch.

Jason's Raspberry Peach Syrup

PREP TIME: 1 MINUTE | COOK TIME: 6 MINUTES

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup real maple syrup
- 1 cup fresh raspberries, chopped coarsely
- 1 cup fresh peaches, peeled and chunked

Method

- Place fresh peaches in microwave safe dish and microwave for 20 seconds. Remove from microwave, mash lightly or run through blender to make smooth.
- In a saucepan, bring maple syrup to a simmer on medium heat. Whisk in mashed peaches and chopped raspberries. Stirring until heated through. Serve over french toast.

Submit your story and recipe by
email at editor@taps.org.

If you're a survivor of suicide loss,
TAPS has a special place for you.

JOIN YOUR TAPS FAMILY

at the

**2017 NATIONAL MILITARY
SUICIDE SURVIVOR SEMINAR**

OCTOBER 6-8, 2017
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

At the National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar, you'll meet other people walking the same road — suicide loss survivors from across the country who come to share stories, struggles, moments of reflection and loving support.

Find strength in your TAPS family, knowing you are not alone as we celebrate the lives of our loved ones. Find out more at www.taps.org/nmsss. Registration opens soon.





Care *within* YOUR COMMUNITY

In addition to peer support and services that TAPS provides, we also connect you to grief resources close to home.

Upon request, TAPS provides a detailed report of support in your community. We do research and make the phone calls to ensure the available groups are an appropriate fit for you. We find out if groups are actively meeting, when the next meeting will be and what you can expect the first time you go. These TAPS Community Resource Reports are provided at no cost to you, and we tailor the information to fit your needs.

If you have found yourself leaning on drugs or alcohol to help you cope with the loss of your loved one, TAPS can help. We work with community partners to ensure the underlying issues are addressed and your needs met. We will connect you directly to our community partners who will work with your insurance company. TAPS is here for you and will support you without judgment.

TAPS also hosts our own local support groups, TAPS Care Groups. Our monthly care groups provide survivors with a truly understanding environment where you can find hope and comfort from your TAPS family. Visit our TAPS Care Group calendar to find a care group near you. If you live near a care group, we provide this information in your Community Resource Report.

Allow TAPS to build a community of compassionate care around you. Request a Community Resource Report by calling 800-959-TAPS (8277) or by filling out the online form at taps.org/communityresourcereport.

America's Family

HONORED BY
AMERICA'S PASTIME
**FROM SEA TO
SHINING SEA**

Survivors from TAPS have had wonderful opportunities to celebrate and honor their heroes at baseball games through teams4taps.

For so many of us the memories of a ball game with our hero means so much. The traditions, the songs, the anthem.... for one young girl Camden Yards for an Orioles game was the last time she saw her father who deployed the next day. For another family it was tradition to have everyone in the Nats gear to watch a game. And then the little boy who cheered for the Twins with his dad and wears his fallen heroes jersey on game day or the sister who shared special memories at Fenway watching the Red Sox with her fallen hero brother. Stories survivors have shared have been so powerful and the opportunity to create joy and go back to the ballpark has been fun and also healing.

From a first pitch in San Diego, standing on the mound in New York on July 4 for the Field of Dreams to seeing two tiny children in their red shirts say "Play Ball" in Atlanta the teams have shown TAPS and our families that they and their sacrifice have not gone unnoticed and we are and will remain a Grateful Nation.





Our *Family* Reunion

23rd National Military Survivor Seminar & Good Grief Camp









it takes a TRIBE

| By Shauna Springer, Ph.D.

When we lose someone we love, it's easy to lose hope. We can become helpless and only see the darkest parts of grief. But there is hope. There is help. There is healing.

It takes a tribe - a group of people who share a common language, culture and history - to preserve life after loss. Those who have lived through similar experiences provide a guiding light and a rallying unit. Professional mental health providers play an important role, but peers and loved ones have a number of compelling advantages over mental health professionals when it comes to saving lives.

The power of touch

Touch has the power to drive an awareness of connection into a person's psyche more deeply than verbal exchanges.

The touch of someone trusted and safe can help ground us. Research has shown that a hug releases oxytocin (a bonding hormone), lowers blood pressure and

decreases cortisol (a stress-related hormone). In the context of a healthy marriage, the act of holding one's partner calms inner chaos and restores a sense of connection and safety.

At TAPS, hugs are used to communicate attachment, safety and commitment to the healing of those who are grieving life-shattering losses.

A trusted peer mentor or a loved one can sit with someone who is suffering, lean into them or put an arm around them. A peer mentor can also offer a prolonged embrace. Deep, safe, positive connection with others has the power to conquer negative, hopeless thinking. A loved one or peer can say nothing and yet communicate a profound sense of connection just with the power of touch.

The power of expressing attachment needs directly

Clinicians may feel a form of love within the context of a strong therapeutic alliance. But it would be very odd (and probably

unethical) for a therapist to say to a patient, "I love you and I need you, so let's figure out how to walk through this valley together on the basis of the love and trust we share." However, this is precisely what a loved one is empowered to say.

A TAPS Peer Mentor might say, "You are a member of the TAPS family now." To some who are in crisis, these can be life-saving words. While clinicians are generally trained to maintain a clinical distance, peers and loved ones can directly express attachment needs at what may be a critical point in time for someone who is suffering with suicidal ideation.

The power of old stories

In my suicide prevention work, I often refer to the suicidal crisis mode as entering "a tunnel of despair and disconnection," where the walls progressively close in. As this happens, patients report that it is hard to access information and memories stored in other parts of their brain, especially positive memories. This is where many can lose hope.

Peers and loved ones can tap into the power of stories that highlight tribal connection. Stories have the power to restore hope. They can remind the one suffering that he or she is a valued and integral member of the tribe. Sometimes stories are irreverent and hilarious ("Remember that night around the fire pit at the TAPS Seminar when...") These stories, perhaps especially the hilarious ones, have a profound power to stimulate reconnection with older memories that reinforce mutual attachment. Likewise, the stories that are written with other members of the TAPS family may become life-saving ones.

A good therapist is also a repository of stories, but typically these are stories of pain, struggle and trauma, not usually hope and connection. This is something I think we need to work on as therapists, but even if we do, loved ones and peers



TAPS IS YOUR TRIBE. WE'RE ALWAYS HERE FOR YOU.

are much more likely to hold the kinds of stories that effectively wage war against despair. This then is another tactical advantage—loved ones can become life-saving historians.

The power to directly orchestrate a tribal response

One of the beautiful things about a tribal response is that no one individual is the holder of either the pain or the hope.

There is a collective responsibility when responding to crisis that aligns directly with the ways in which military Service Members and their families operate. The TAPS family functions as a healing tribe for the many we serve through wraparound care. Within this healing tribe, we deploy each other as needed to further our common mission.

I worked with Veterans for several years before joining TAPS and often received a question: *how do I help my brother- or sister-in-arms who is struggling?* I told my patients that in many ways they have an advantage over someone like me. Every situation is different but as a consistent rule, I aimed to decrease the fear and discomfort in approaching a loved one who may be in crisis. In response to this question, I told them:

- stand in loving watch of each other
- deploy the power of touch
- if their love is stronger than their fear or pride, they will move in close
- despair and disconnection are the enemy, and love and trust are natural antidotes to this poisonous influence

- speak clearly and directly about their love, respect, and need for continued connection
- tell stories, especially the irreverent, hilarious ones
- call in the tribe to help their loved one stay in the fight

Find additional support for you or your loved one in need at taps.org. There, you'll find ways to get connected to supportive services, request a TAPS Peer Mentor or sign up to join the tribe as a peer mentor to someone else.

TAPS is your tribe. We're always here for you. ★



WHEN *does the hurt*

GO AWAY?

By Artis Henderson

Surviving spouse of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Miles Henderson

On a recent morning, I was working in the front yard of my house in Florida when a neighbor walked over. Before then, we'd never said more than hello, but on that morning he wanted to talk. So we talked about my mango trees, about the drought, about the avocado he'd planted that never took hold. When we'd run through all of it and I couldn't think of where to take the conversation next, my neighbor surprised me by saying, "I heard you lost your husband."

It's been 10 years since my husband Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Miles Henderson died in Iraq, but the simple fact of it can still take my breath away.

"I did," I said.

My neighbor nodded thoughtfully. "I lost a son."

My hand went reflexively to my chest, to the place that hurts when I meet someone else who knows grief.

"How long has it been?" I asked my neighbor.

"Three years," he said.

"Three years." I shook my head. "You're still so early."

My neighbor looked at me wild-eyed, as if I'd said exactly the last thing he wanted to hear.

"I'm good," he assured me. "I've moved through the worst of it."

I nodded a bit too emphatically. "Of course."

Yet though I'm finding my grief does not have an end date, I've discovered that it's still possible to move forward, to have a good life, a life that sometimes – often, even – eclipses that sadness.



But I remembered my own three-year mark, when my heart had hurt so much and for so long that I was sure my grief would end soon. It had to, I reasoned. I couldn't take much more.

After Miles died, when I met people further along in their grief journey than I was, I would ask them, "When does this end? When does the hurt go away?"

They would shake their heads in sympathy, but not one could give me an answer.

"Time helps," they said.

"How much time?" I wanted to know. "A year? Three? Ten?"

No one would say. Only recently, I've started to understand why.

I've begun telling people that I'm finally coming out the other side of my grief. Part of it has to do with time — it's been more than 10 years — and part of it is circumstance (I love my little house; I'm

following my dream of writing and I'm in a solid relationship). Yet even now, in certain moments, I'm still reminded that the journey is ongoing.

When I moved into my home two years ago, I stored the last relics of my life with Miles at my mother's place. I was determined that my new house would be a space for the life I was building, not the life I had lost. And there wasn't much left, just the two bins they'd sent home from Iraq and the clothes we wore at our wedding. I planned to do something with them eventually, I told myself, I just wasn't sure when.

But three weeks ago my mother called to tell me that she's remodeling her guest room and asked if I would mind sorting through the things I had left there.

"What am I supposed to do with them?" I asked, panicked.

"You'll have to decide for yourself," she said.

I wish I could tell you that I went to her place right away, that I sorted through the bins, that I brought our wedding clothes back to my little house. But I didn't. Even as I write this, I still haven't found the nerve. The truth is, I'm afraid. I'm afraid to look in those bins again. I'm afraid to hold my wedding dress. I'm afraid of how much it still hurts, even now, even with my house and my writing and my sweet boyfriend. Even after 10 years.

When people who have recently lost a loved one ask me how long it will be before the pain goes away, I tell them I don't know. But I think I do. I'm beginning to see that it will always be with us, in the way that our loved ones are always with us. As long as I have my memories of Miles, I will have the hurt that comes with losing him. And that's ok. Because I'm also discovering that it's possible to move forward, even with that hurt, and that this new life can still be filled with joy. *





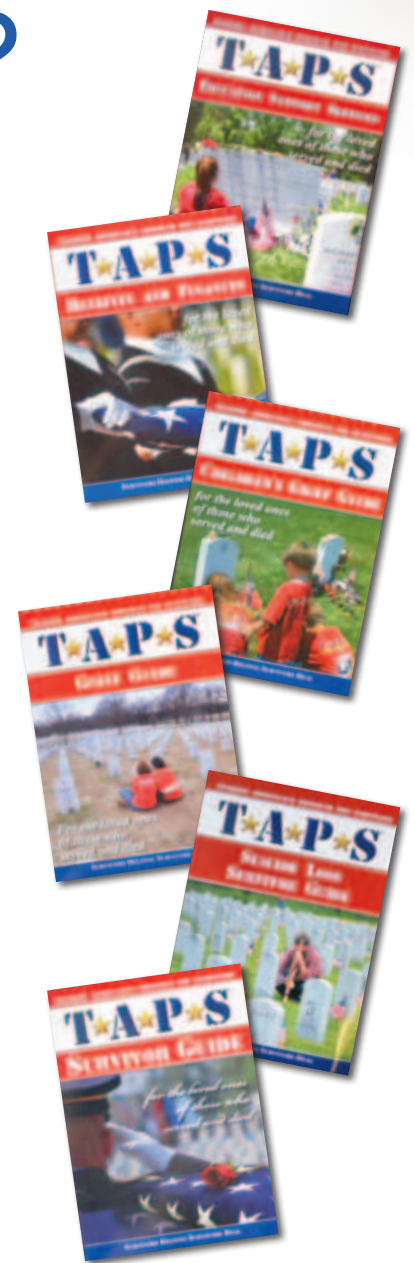
Wish there was a guide to loss and grief?

We did, too.

The confusion and uncertainty of our emotions following the death of a loved one can make us wish that we somehow had a guide to get us through the days and, even worse, the nights.

TAPS has created a series of pocket-sized guides for many various aspects of grief: Survivor Guide, Benefits and Finances, Education Support Services, Children's Grief, Grief Guide and Supporting Survivors of Suicide Loss. These quick series guides, written by survivors and supported by experts in the field of grief, were put together to offer TAPS families guidance on the challenges faced after the loss of a loved one in the military. These guides offer tools and resources that can be utilized no matter where you are on the grief journey. They share TAPS programming, define grief and trauma, help you find your footing and give advice for finding your way forward.

TAPS Quick Series Guides are available at no cost to survivors. TAPS Quick Series Guides are available in the resource village at TAPS Seminars. Download the TAPS Survivor Guide free on your smartphone or tablet by searching for "TAPS - Tragedy Assistance" in the App Store.



If you're a surviving military family loved one and would like to get a copy of the Quick Series Guides, email info@taps.org and please confirm your mailing address.

JOIN YOUR TAPS FAMILY

August – December 2017

AUGUST

**St. Louis Inner Warrior
Wellness Weekend**

August 4-6

★

**Washington Women's
Empowerment Retreat**

August 13-18

★

Machu Picchu Expedition

August 14-22

★

**San Diego Inner Warrior
Wellness Weekend**

August 18-22

★

Hawaii Na Koa

Wounded Warrior Canoe Ragatta

August 19

★

Atlanta Parents Retreat

August 22-26

SEPTEMBER

Mount Shasta Climbing Expedition

September 7-10

★

**Tampa Survivor Seminar
and Good Grief Camp**

September 8-11

★

Montana Men's Retreat

September 13-17

★

**Baltimore Inner Warrior
Wellness Weekend**

September 15-17

★

Boston Widows Retreat

September 20-24

★

**Colorado Good Grief
Camp Adventure**

September 23-24

★

**Colorado Dude Ranch
All Populations Retreat**

September 24-29

OCTOBER

**The Gary Sinise Foundation
Presents The Hollywood Adventure**

October 2-5

★

**National Military Suicide Survivor
Seminar and Good Grief Camp**

October 6-8

★

**TAPS Empowerment
Women's Week of Renewal**

October 22-27

NOVEMBER

Georgia Family Retreat

November 10-13

DECEMBER

**San Diego Survivor Seminar
and Good Grief Camp**

December 1-4

**San Antonio Inner Warrior
Wellness Weekend**

December 8-10



help

THE UNSTUCK APPROACH

I believe treatment for depression should be integrative. It's a way to get unstuck, to help us move through and beyond depression and other difficulties that our lives may bring us.

In my book, "Unstuck: Your Guide to the Seven-Stage Journey Out of Depression," I explain that this comprehensive approach combines conventional treatments, including various forms of psychotherapy, with other techniques to enhance a person's emotional life, cognitive abilities and physical health. Medication is sometimes used, but only when other combined treatments don't work.

Though the integrative approach is safe and appropriate for everyone, including children (who are increasingly diagnosed with depression), it is especially useful for women, whose rates of depression are twice as high as those of men.

Research is unclear concerning this difference, but it may be related to hormonal balance in the female body —

particularly prior to menstruation and postpartum — and perhaps to a higher incidence of thyroid dysfunction. In my opinion, an approach that encourages women to take charge of their own treatment, and gives them the self-care tools to do it, helps transform this conditioned sense of powerlessness.

Working with a skilled therapist can be important, even crucial, in healing from depression, but that work can be exponentially enhanced by what you do for yourself.

The goal with the Unstuck Approach is to learn to understand and help ourselves, so we can overcome feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that are hallmarks of depression. Here are the key elements. All have been demonstrated to relieve depression. Used together, each enhances the effectiveness of the others.

Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness helps people become relaxed, aware and firmly grounded in

the present moment. I teach specific meditation techniques such as slow, deep, soft-belly breathing and mindful walking and eating, which have been shown to decrease levels of anxiety and stress, enhance mood and optimism and promote greater emotional stability and more reliable judgment.

Neuroscientist Sara Lazar, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, has shown that regular meditation increases the thickness of the cerebral cortex in parts of the brain associated with executive functions such as reasoning and responsiveness.

Increase Movement and Exercise

Movement is central to an integrative approach. Research has shown repeatedly that exercise equals antidepressants in relieving symptoms of depression and raising neurotransmitter levels. A number of studies, including several done at Duke University by James Blumenthal, M.D., and his colleagues, show exercise-triggered mood increases at least as great



By James S. Gordon, M.D.

SOFT-BELLY

Breathing

Conscious use of deep breathing overrides the pattern of fast, shallow breathing that characterizes the fight-or-flight and stress responses, and it provides more oxygen to support relaxed mental function. Slow, deep breathing also decreases blood pressure and heart rate, improves intestinal function, and lowers the stress hormone cortisol. Here's how to do it:

1. Sit in a quiet place and close your eyes. Breathe slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Allow your midsection to be soft as you breath.

2. As you breath in, say to yourself, "Soft." As you breathe out, say, "Belly." This will focus your mind and remind you that you want your belly to be soft and relaxed.

3. When thoughts come, let them come, and then let them go. Gently bring your mind back to the phrase "soft belly."

4. When you're ready, or when your timer rings, bring your attention back to the room.

Begin by doing this practice for five or 10 minutes, maybe twice a day. If you're too agitated to sit, get up and do some chores or take a walk. Then try it again. You can sit on a park bench, in a library or a church, or at home.

Sitting this way will not make the thoughts go away – and trying to force them away will only reinforce their importance – but it will give you some peace and quiet amidst your thoughts, and allow you to get some distance from them.

Courtesy of *Experience Life*

as those achieved with antidepressants — and sometimes better.

They suggest at least 30 minutes of daily exercise is optimal (this is much easier when it's an activity you enjoy), but all of us should start with what we can do — and what we like to do. Walking a couple of blocks a day is a great beginning.

Improve Nutrition

How we eat can be crucial in preventing, as well as treating, depression. People who are depressed may be deficient in one or more nutrients, including B Vitamins, Vitamin D3, Selenium, Magnesium and Omega-3 fatty acids. Some people are sensitive to gluten and other food substances that may cause inflammation, which has been implicated in depression.

Also, we are just now beginning to understand the complex relationship between the gut, the brain and our emotional well-being. One of the intriguing recent findings is that probiotics, which normalize gut bacteria, may provide significant relief to people who have been diagnosed with depressive disorders. The supplement regimen I prescribe usually includes a daily probiotic — a combination of acidophilus and bifidus — with two to three billion live bacteria.

Stimulate Imagination and Intuition

Creative practices nourish the body and mind. I teach techniques like guided imagery, drawing and spontaneous written dialogues with one's symptoms, problems and issues. These often help depressed and anxious people access their imaginations and use intuition to address emotional challenges.

For example, using a technique called Wise Guide, a 13-year-old boy with whom I was working closed his eyes and imagined himself in a safe place. When I suggested that he envision a "wise guide," he visualized a large, kind dog named Friend. When the boy asked Friend how he could deal with his anxiety about tests and speaking in class, Friend advised him to imagine that he, Friend, was sitting next to the boy in school, and that the boy was hugging him. The image quieted the boy's fears. He began to speak up in class and his grades improved.

Get Support

Many people find that being part of a group where they share experiences and learn skills multiplies the benefits of their self-care. In the Mind-Body Skills groups that we've developed at the Center for

Mind-Body Medicine, professionals teach self-awareness and a variety of self-care skills. Participants are treated as students, not as damaged or ill patients. They often say they feel like pilgrims together on a journey toward greater understanding, health and wholeness.

Connect to Something Greater

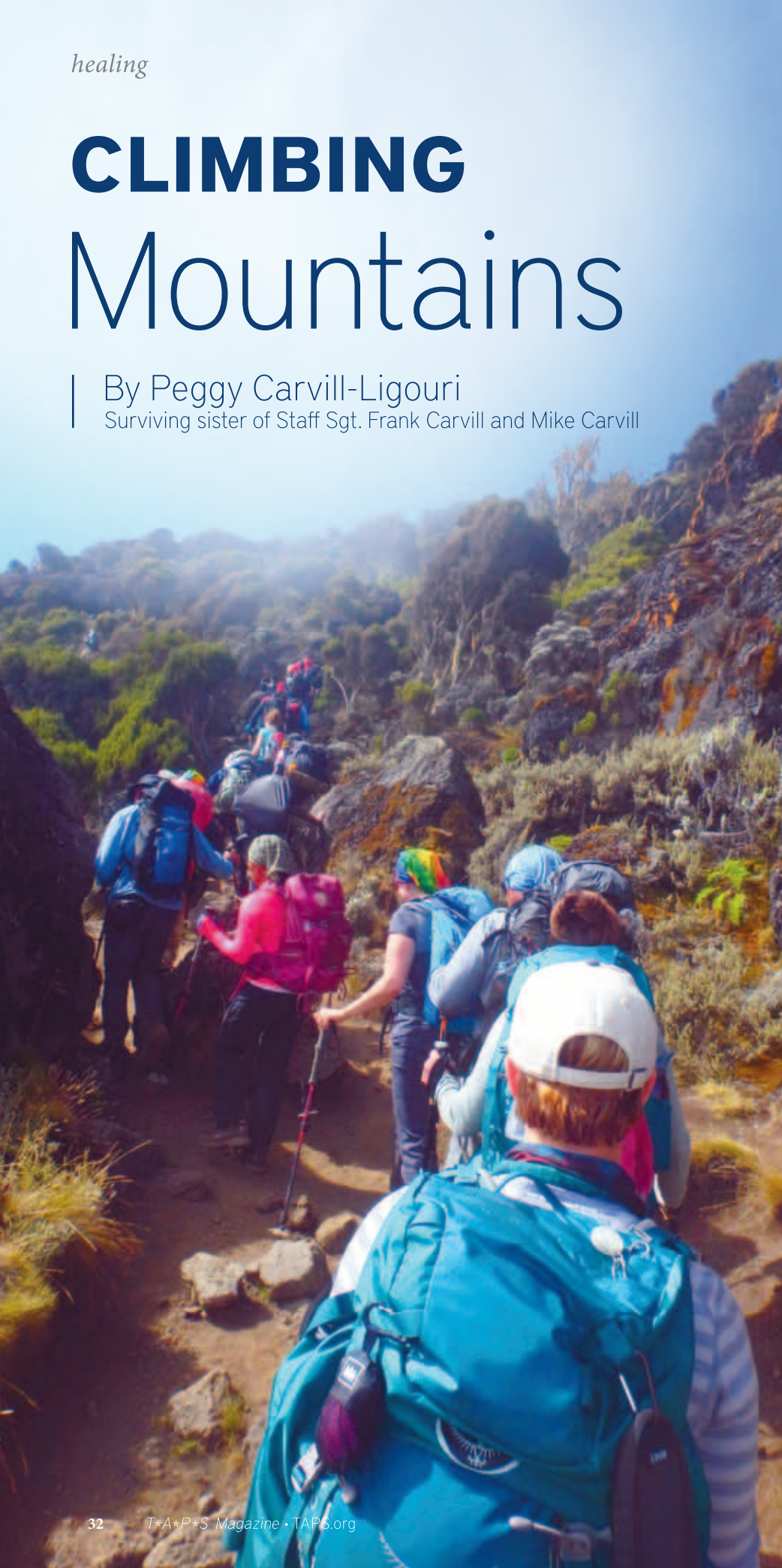
Using self-care techniques and living more meditatively often paves the way for us to connect with something greater than ourselves — God, nature, a higher power — and to find meaning and purpose in our lives. A sense of connection, meaning and purpose is among the most powerful proven antidotes to depression. So, look for ways to tap into that feeling regularly, whether it's developing a daily reflective ritual, attending a spiritual service or volunteering to help those in need. As your sense of meaning and purpose expands, your vulnerability to depression will diminish. *

Adapted with the permission of *Experience Life* magazine from the article "Free Yourself from Depression."

CLIMBING Mountains

By Peggy Carvill-Ligouri

Surviving sister of Staff Sgt. Frank Carvill and Mike Carvill



We all have mountains to climb, mine just happened to be in Tanzania, Africa. Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro challenged me and changed me in ways I never thought possible.

I started with the sole purpose of honoring the memories of my two brothers, Mike and Frank. Mike died of colon cancer on September 23, 2003. Frank was killed in action in Sadr City, Iraq, on June 4, 2004. They loved travel, adventure and any and all outdoor activities. Climbing Kilimanjaro is exactly the kind of adventure the two of them would have loved.

I read the TAPS Expeditions announcement with excitement and a bit of trepidation. My hiking experience was limited; my trekking and high altitude experience was completely non-existent. I had never slept on the ground or in a tent. I was 56 years old and, I could afford to lose a few pounds. Going to Africa to climb a mountain was way outside my comfort zone. In fact, my comfort zone was at sea level, on a different continent on a different tectonic plate. We do crazy things to honor those ones we love, and to honor ourselves.

As with any TAPS event, the best part was meeting the incredible fellow TAPS surviving family members. The instant camaraderie was such a soothing, healing balm on the wound of loss. The ability to have someone completely understand the depth of what I was saying was so comforting. That alone was worth a trip to Africa.

Not only did I meet new friends in Africa, including our wonderful guides, Carole and Vern Tejas, but I also learned a lot about loss, survival, living, love and the choices we have the power to make. After losing my brothers, having numerous family health problems and many life altering issues in the span of 18 months, I was a little dead inside, maybe even a lot.

Existing and living are two different entities. Learning to live again, learning to find joy again, took me a while. Recognizing my new normal and making a life in that space were two distinctly different and difficult challenges. But taking steps, literally and figuratively, in the direction of honoring my brothers helped me to do both.

I trained long and hard for Kilimanjaro. Along the way, people wished me luck on my endeavor to reach the "Roof of Africa." I couldn't promise I would summit, but I could promise that I would do my best.

It was during those many hours of training that I realized I liked being strong. I could do more than I ever thought before. I enjoyed the challenge. I enjoyed reaching goals. Without even realizing it, I started to live again - not just for my brothers, but for me too.

The first time I ever slept on the ground or in a tent was 9,900 feet up Mount Kilimanjaro. I was cold and miserable and having quite a pity party when I asked myself if this was my best. The answer was a resounding no. I could do better. Then I remembered the wise words of Carole Tejas, "Don't look at the whole mountain; just look at one section at a time and then ask yourself if you can take one more step. If the answer is yes, take that step."

I answered yes to taking one more step on Mount Kilimanjaro. I answered yes to taking one more step to once again find joy and happiness in my life. I realized I could not change my situation, but I could change my response to that situation.

Do your best and take that step. Maybe, just maybe, being outside your comfort zone is not such a bad thing after all.

Don't look at the whole mountain; just look at one section at a time and then ask yourself if you can take one more step. If the answer is yes, take that step.

This year, I took another step and attended the Inner Warrior Wellness Weekend in Baltimore. I learned running techniques, the Galloway Method, zone training, heel strikes, running posture and hand and arm position. I had no idea - I always just went out and ran. I ran poorly, but I ran. Now, I'm trying to incorporate as many of

the running techniques as possible into my training. My pace is improving. I no longer feel like I am being pounded into the ground.

Choosing a healthy lifestyle and challenging myself has brought me joy. With this new-found joy in living and my increased confidence in running, I signed up for the Army 10 Miler this fall.

The farthest I will have ever run. Doing something outside of my comfort zone, especially with TAPS, is always a good thing. I'm pushing myself to live for my brothers and for myself.

In the words of the TAPS Inner Warrior, "Our lives will be our tribute." This is exactly how

I have decided to live my life. I have a new normal. I can't change that my brothers died, but I can change what I do with my loss.

Do your best, take that step, live your life and find your joy. You could climb mountains too. *



Talking to Children About Suicide

By Kim Ruocco MSW | TAPS Chief External Officer for Suicide Prevention and Postvention

One of the most challenging issues following a death by suicide is what and how to tell children. Widespread inaccurate information compounds this already challenging issue for those caring for grieving children. When a loved one dies by suicide, it could take some time to trust your instincts and follow your heart again, so credible information and trustworthy guidance is critical.

Children are egocentric, meaning they believe that the world revolves around them and everything that happens in it, is related to them. This is important to remember when it comes to suicide. If something doesn't make sense, or if a child hears information

that doesn't match what they've been told, they may make it about themselves or make up and imagine details.

They might think a suicide is their fault, or tell themselves things like, "If I was only good enough, he would have stayed," or "I should have told her I loved her."

When children are told the truth, they are better able to grieve the death in

healthy, adaptive ways and understand that it wasn't their fault. Telling children the truth, in a developmentally appropriate way, builds trust and strengthens the bond between parent, caregiver or other adults-- creating an environment where the child is more likely to talk about his or her grief journey openly.

Children who have lost a loved one to suicide can be at increased risk themselves. There are many reasons for this, including the increased possibility of inherited risk factors, as well as the fact that suicide has now been introduced into their life as an alternative to solve problems and/or end pain.

Discussions about suicide, mental health and the associated risk factors will significantly decrease the risk in child survivors. Among many things, it provides an opportunity to talk about help-seeking behaviors, coping skills and the need for self care.





Discussions about suicide, mental health and the associated risk factors will significantly decrease the risk in child survivors. Among many things, it provides an opportunity to talk about help-seeking behaviors, coping skills and the need for self care.

Sharing age-appropriate information about the contributing factors that led to the suicide of their loved one can also help a child cope with the nature of their loss by decreasing feelings of guilt and shame, while increasing the child's understanding of the changes happening within their family.

As adults, it can be hard to talk about suicide, so it is understandable that it can be even more difficult for children to discuss. Every child grieves differently and has a different level of comfort when it comes to talking to others about their loss. It is vital that we help children find the words to use if they want to talk about the death of their loved one, but also give them the permission and language needed to express if they don't want to talk about it.

For example, one child may feel comfortable saying, "My dad died by suicide because he suffered with post traumatic stress after war," while another child may feel more comfortable saying, "My mom died from depression," and a third child may prefer to say, "I really don't want to talk about it right now." It is important for parents, caregivers, counselors and teachers to help these

Rebuilding a family after a suicide can be a challenging endeavor, but it is possible to create a foundation that leads to hope, healing and a new level of understanding and connection.

children find the right words and practice using them.

It takes a team to help children heal after suicide loss. This team can include parents, grandparents, adult siblings, aunts and uncles, coaches, teachers, counselors and mentors. It is important that the team of adults talk to one another to understand the individual needs of the child and join together with the family to best support

a healthy grief journey. The more the team communicates with one another about the child and directly with the child, the more likely that child will feel safe and supported.

Rebuilding a family after a suicide can be a challenging endeavor, but it is possible to create a foundation that leads to hope, healing and a new level of understanding and connection. A loving foundation created with honesty and trust can better provide a safe place for a child to heal. It also sets the stage for when the child grows into other developmental stages and faces future life challenges.

For more information about healing after suicide loss, please ask about the TAPS Quick Series resource on the topic or call TAPS 24/7 at 800.959.TAPS (8277). Need more support for your family after a suicide loss? Plan to attend the National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar this October in Phoenix. Register at taps.org/nmsss. *

Children's Books *for the Summer*

| Reviewed by Cheryl A. Kreutter, Ph.D.

By and large, the books reviewed here describe how empathy (an emotion) prompts compassion (an action). Each will appeal in different ways to different readers at different times. Characters are identifiable and real, and illustrations appropriately support the story, theme or concept. Most importantly, these are books that invite readers to discuss their own thoughts and feelings about loss as well as consider ways they can honor their loved ones who died. This summer, pick up a book, or several, for your child as you journey to a new place on the map or on the path of grief.

PRESCHOOLERS

"If Only I Could Fly"

By Rhonda Manyak
Illustrated by Sabrina Tarrab

"If Only I Could Fly" relates in verse a child's longing to reunite with a loved one by flying "straight up to you" in a plane, on a magic carpet, in a hot air balloon, on a kite tail, on the wings of a bird, on a unicorn, on a butterfly or bumblebee or even a rocket. Alas, the child must settle for knowing "you're my angel and never very far." Among the few books available for preschoolers who have lost someone close, this text will engage young children through its simple rhyme, soothing rhythm and colorful illustrations.

"Moonlight Memoirs: Remembering that Family and Friends are Forever"

By Maggie Lei Lewis
Illustrated by Melody Lea Lamb

In simple verse, this story tells of two mice who learn through a wise old mouse and a magic star that loved ones who have died are "not truly gone," but, rather, continue to "watch those we love." This religious text relays a promise of eternal life and reunion with loved ones. Lovely illustrations are reminiscent of a silent, snowy Christmas Eve scene.

AGES 6 – 10

"Klinger, A Story of Honor and Hope"

By Betsy Beard
Illustrated by Shelley Johannes

Beautifully illustrated, this award winning, fact-based fictional text tells the story of Klinger, a large and gentle black horse who serves in the Caisson Platoon at Ft. Meyer in Arlington, Virginia. His job is to pull the wagons that carry our nation's fallen heroes to their final resting place. From birth, Klinger was told he was a special horse, but he did not understand how he was special until he meets the children of a father he honors on his first day as a Caisson horse. In its second printing, this popular TAPS book will bring comfort to both children and adults.

"The Flat Rabbit"

By Bardur Oskarsson
Translated by Marita Thomsen

A dog and a rat have come across a flattened rabbit in the road and agree that "lying there can't be much fun." But where do they move her? The dog racks his brain and comes





up with a unique idea to give the rabbit a proper send off. They cannot be sure that their unusual plan has helped the rabbit get somewhere better, but they take comfort in knowing they did their best to memorialize their friend. Although simply told with a touch of humor and minimal artwork, the story's profound message of compassion and respect is deepened every time the reader returns.

"Emily Lost Someone She Loved"

By Kathleen Fucci
Illustrated by Shirley-Ng Benitez

Emily is sad after losing a parent and no longer finds joy in being with her family and friends nor in doing activities she once loved. She weeps, screams and even throws temper tantrums but her loneliness and anger remain. One night, her father helps her understand she can find healing through the Word of God. First, she learns the words by heart but soon they are in her heart, and she knows God is with her. A faith-based, beautifully illustrated, highly relatable book for children, ages 6 - 10.

"Cry, Heart, but Never Break"

By Glenn Ringtved
Illustrated by Charlotte Pardi
Translated by Robert Moulthrop

A Danish author wrote this text to help prepare his own children for the pending death of their beloved grandmother. Grandmother has a visitor. It is Death, sitting at the kitchen table with the children. The children hatch a plot to ply the figure with so much coffee that it will be forced to leave without Grandmother. Their plan fails, and the children ask why Grandmother must die. In response, Death, whose "heart is as red as the most beautiful sunset and beats with a great love of life," tells the story

of the sisters, Joy and Delight, who marry the brothers, Grief and Sorrow. Both couples die on the same day because, Death explains, how does one live without the other? Illustrations are a soothing mixture of pencil, watercolor and acrylics. Of particular note is the depiction of Death as an empathetic character with a sad, but not scary, countenance. This book won the 2016 Batchelder Award for outstanding literature written in another language and outside the USA.

"Frog and the Birdsong"

By Max Velthuis

Young Frog, Young Pig and Young Duck find a blackbird lying in a clearing. At first they surmise that he is sleeping or sick until Hare, the oldest, comes along and determines that the blackbird is dead. Frog asks, "Dead...What's that?" to which Hare reports, "Everything dies." Hare directs the others to help bury the blackbird in the meadow, which they do with utmost care and respect. It is very quiet, "not even one note of birdsong." Afterwards, they leave silently. Suddenly, the youngest, Frog entices his friends into a game of tag. They play and laugh. As they set off for home, they hear a blackbird sing, "as always." The message: Life continues, and children can be happy again. Parents and caregivers will recognize in the characters how the concept of death evolves as children mature.

AGES 8 - 12

"Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss"

By Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen
Illustrated by Taylor Bills

Grandy is cooking up a pot of tear soup; she has lost someone dear. She mixes in memories along with her tears and lets it simmer as she puts even more things into it. The whole process is exhausting. Her young grandson wonders about the tear soup and asks her what she learned as she made it. She replies: "I've learned that there is something down deep within all of us ready to help us survive the things we think we can't survive." Readers will relate to the numerous emotions illustrated throughout the text. Worth noting are "Grandy's Cooking Tips" that provide the reader information about grief as well as self-care tips. This text is well worth reading and rereading for children and adults alike.

"Michael Rosen's Sad Book"

By Michael Rosen
Illustrated by Quentin Blake

Michael Rosen, a former British Children's Laureate, is best known for his children's picture books such as "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" (illustrated by Helen Oxenbury) and "Bananas in my Ears" (illustrated by Quentin Blake). However, "Michael Rosen's Sad Book" is not like the others: It is a picture book for older children and adults who can empathize with the author's profound sadness over the loss of his son and his struggle to find his way out of "a place that is deep and dark." Quentin Blake's illustrations support the mood of the Rosen's text throughout. At the beginning they are somber gray. Then, as the author reflects on happy memories and ponders things he loves such as birthdays and candles, the images are warmer and brighter. While the ending is not upbeat, the story does offer reassurance that feeling sad is part of life and that there is hope for brighter days.



An Unexpected Transformation

| Joe Quenga |

Joe made sure his friend's final wishes were granted. Upon meeting Joe, TAPS President and Founder Bonnie Carroll invited him to take part as a TAPS family member. Joe pledged to step into the position left by Pablo and answer the call to serve.

Joe developed an ambitious plan – to honor Pablo's legacy through volunteering for "every single event" with TAPS that Pablo did, all within a year.

Joe dove in as a Good Grief Camp Mentor at the 2016 TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. He completed service projects and volunteered at events with TAPS partners and supporters, like the Yellow Ribbons United and the Washington Wizards. Just as Ruiz had done before him, Joe joined the Courage Caps campaign, with proceeds going to TAPS.

He helped the Baltimore Ravens training camp when they visited wounded service members at Joint Base Andrews and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Joe volunteered at the Washington International Horse Show and the annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala. While Joe worked toward his goal, he also shared Pablo's story.

It was difficult the first time he shared the story of what brought him to TAPS during a Good Grief Camp Mentor debrief, but he got through it.

By sharing the story of Pablo and TAPS, Joe has forged connections and found

healing. He now writes short stories, blogs and news articles. "Every time I can tell Pablo's story and the TAPS story, I try to share." This year's TAPS National Military Survivors Seminar and Good Grief Camp debrief was different. Joe felt comfortable sharing why he chose to volunteer. "I thought it was me giving something to TAPS in [Pablo's] memory," he said, "but it turned out [volunteering] helped me express my feelings about the situation. I didn't know that was going to happen."

As Joe's first year of volunteer service came to an end this May, he reached his goal. He even created a living tribute to his friend's memory. At this year's National Military Survivor Seminar, Joe presented Bonnie Carroll with a check for \$1,000 to fund a legacy scholarship in Pablo's honor. The award will go to a graduating senior from the TAPS Good Grief Camp. Joe plans to continue this mission, working with donors to make the scholarship annual. Already, his efforts have raised \$5,000 towards the scholarship award for 2018. This level of service is the essence of Joe, and it's also the heart of TAPS. Thank you Joe for stepping forward to help us care for families of America's fallen heroes.

Since Army Capt. Joe Quenga began volunteering with TAPS in May 2016, he has recorded nearly 130 hours during 11 events, ranging from mentoring youth at the National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp to service projects at the TAPS headquarters office. Whether he's packaging TAPS Christmas ornaments or spending time with his two-time mentee, Joe's commitment to both surviving military families and the TAPS mission is clear.

Joe served with the late Master Sgt. Pablo Ruiz III in the Army where they forged a strong working and personal relationship. Pablo's volunteerism with TAPS, from 2013 until his tragic death in May 2015 while serving in Afghanistan, was an inspiration.

Before Pablo left for his final deployment, he made it clear that should he not make it home, donations were to be made to TAPS in lieu of flowers for his funeral. He wanted others to volunteer with TAPS as well. He also wanted to have TAPS represented at his funeral. As Pablo's brother-in-arms,

TAPS welcomes
new volunteers.

Visit us at taps.org or
email volunteer@taps.org.

The Value *of Giving Back*

Long before surviving military families walk through the doors at the Crystal Gateway Marriott, staff and volunteers start transforming the hotel into a welcoming space for the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. It takes more than 750 volunteers to set up and help staff at the annual event in Arlington, Virginia. From packing backpacks for Good Grief campers and mentors to folding nearly 3,000 red TAPS t-shirts for check-in, and a million hugs in between, these dedicated and selfless volunteers spend a combined 17,142 hours over Memorial Day weekend, ensuring our families receive the healing support they need.

TAPS relies on a mix of individual volunteers, corporate volunteer groups and military mentors to fill all the volunteer needs during the seminar. TAPS engages corporate sponsors by encouraging them to provide employee volunteers throughout the weekend. This not only helps TAPS meet vital staffing needs, but also helps bring financial donations to life by providing an opportunity for donors to see the impact of their service and support from an intimate vantage point.

During the weekend, Area Finance Officer for Aimco Jarrett Pohle worked the Good Grief Camp Zone, Field Day USA and the Sunday TAPS Good Grief Camp luncheon. He also volunteered along with his wife, Michelle, and his 5-year-old son, Gregory, to set up for the TAPS Family Banquet.

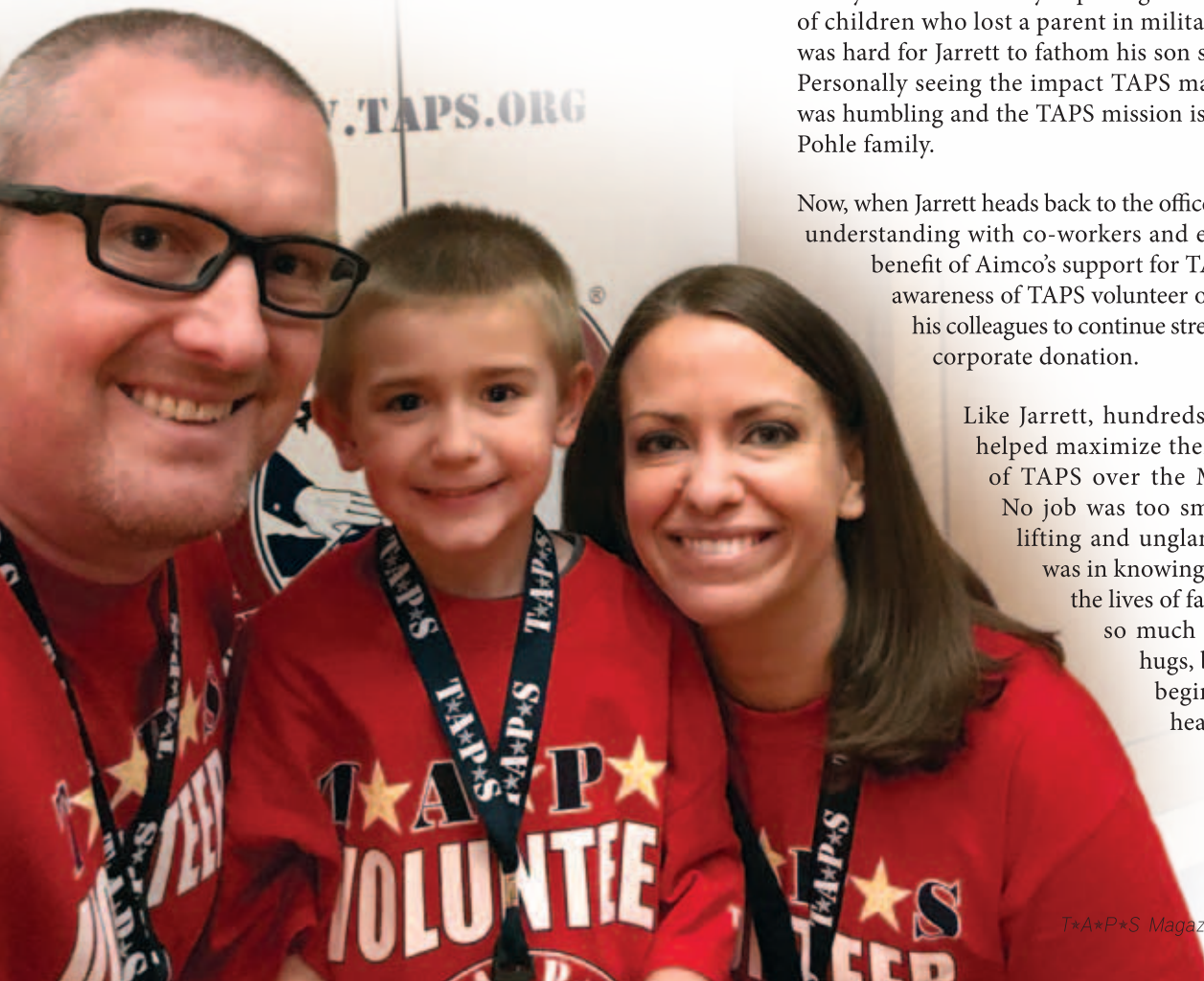
The Pohle family has a rich history of military service. Michelle's brother was a combat medic in Iraq, and her dad served 30 years as a Naval officer. It was important for Jarrett to show his son the value of giving back to others and highlighting their commitment to supporting service members and their families.

As a first time TAPS volunteer, Jarrett was committed to helping make Aimco's monetary donation go further. He believes, "Money goes a long way, but willing hands really help make an even bigger impact from an original donation." He watched as staff and volunteers turned around a new plan on Sunday for the Good Grief Camp luncheon. "Having volunteers on site made the response seamless so that kids and military mentors at the luncheon never even noticed the last-minute changes."

Instead of seeing only the general mission of TAPS, Jarrett and his family witnessed the eye opening transformation and resilience of children who lost a parent in military service. As a parent, it was hard for Jarrett to fathom his son suffering that kind of loss. Personally seeing the impact TAPS makes on grieving children was humbling and the TAPS mission is real in a new way for the Pohle family.

Now, when Jarrett heads back to the office, he can share his personal understanding with co-workers and executives to measure the benefit of Aimco's support for TAPS. He hopes to increase awareness of TAPS volunteer opportunities to encourage his colleagues to continue stretching the value of Aimco's corporate donation.

Like Jarrett, hundreds of corporate volunteers helped maximize their organization's support of TAPS over the Memorial Day weekend. No job was too small. Many did the heavy lifting and unglamorous jobs. The reward was in knowing they made a difference in the lives of families who have sacrificed so much for America. And in the hugs, because every TAPS event begins and ends with hope, healing and plenty of hugs.





TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS
3033 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 630
Arlington, VA 22201

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
Stevens Point, WI
PERMIT NO. 272

800.959.TAPS (8277) ★ TAPS.org

TAPS offers *help, hope*
and *healing* to all those
grieving the death of
a military loved one.

Connect with us:



TAPS is a participant organization in the
Combined Federal Campaign, No. 11309

SUMMON YOUR INNER WARRIOR

Grief takes a toll on the body, not just the spirit. But you don't have to just survive; you can thrive. Join us at an Inner Warrior Wellness Weekend as we build our foundation for handling grief and loss with knowledge, practical tools and radical self-care.

During TAPS Inner Warrior Wellness Weekends, you'll learn to fight for the life your loved one wanted for you: a life of purpose, meaning, joy and health. You'll build strength, resolve and courage for daily life and exceptional adventures. Wherever you are in your grief journey, the TAPS Inner Warrior Program can help you become the best possible living legacy.

Plan to join your TAPS family

as we help you take care of your hero's most important thing - you. Visit taps.org/events or call **800.959.TAPS (8277)** to find an Inner Warrior event.

