



# Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.



# United We Stand

## Convention 2012 - 70th Anniversary

SEPTEMBER 2012  
NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE-1/2012

Forward your  
Articles To:  
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Pat Soler- BSMA National President

I am a Blue Star Mother because my son, Kyle, enlisted in the Army in January 2005, after graduating from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. The very next month, I went to my first Blue Star Mom Chapter meeting and became a member. I was mentored and nurtured by other Moms who had already survived Boot Camp, Airborne, Ranger School and multiple deployments. They have become my friends for life. Had it not been for his single action, I would never have met the most wonderful, caring and supportive women that I call sisters.

My son has deployed twice to Iraq, is currently in his 2nd deployment in Afghanistan and I am so proud of him. He has survived IEDs, a gun-

shot wound, hand to hand combat, and most recently, a direct lightning strike. His experiences and training (and the fact that he has shared a lot of information with me) allow me to return the favor of those Moms that supported me early on, as I strive to mentor others as they need support, love and compassion.

I was active in my chapter, assuming Officer and Chairperson roles and was honored to be sent to a National Convention. The next year I was nominated and elected National Financial Secretary, a position I held for two years. I learned about a wider world of mothers, far greater than the breadth of my chapter. I met the most wonderful women who were committed to the BSM mission. I had no choice but to follow in their

shoes!

I also have a 25 year old daughter, Kelly, who is getting her Masters in Social Welfare and I am so proud of her accomplishments. She has not had an easy path and to see her succeed is so heartwarming.

Rounding out the family is my almost-91 year old Mom who lives with me, and my cat and dog; a well-rounded and grateful family. I look forward to doing my best and serving you, the best sisters I will ever have. I founded my chapter, SC7, in February 2008 and continue to serve as President. I have served as National Historian in 2008-2009, National Finance Committee Chairman 2009-2010, and National Financial Secretary 2010-2012. I am currently the National Treasurer.



### Jean Burlingame, BSMA Patriotic Instructor

September 11th by a Presidential Proclamation and a joint resolution approved by Congress, is to be regarded as Patriot Day or America Remembers. It is an observance to remember those who were injured or died during the terrorist plane attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in the skies over Pennsylvania.

September 18th please wish a Happy 65th Birthday to those serving and those who have served in the United States Air Force.

Initially part of the United States Army, the USAF was formed as a separate branch of the military on September

18th, 1947. The United States Air Force (USAF) is the aerial warfare service branch of the United States Armed Forces and is the most recent branch of the U.S. military to be formed.

September 21st is National POW/MIA Day. Observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day are held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities. It is traditionally observed on the third Friday in September each year. This observance is one of six days throughout the year that Congress has mandated the flying of the National League of Families'

POW/MIA flag. The others are Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day. The flag is to be flown at major military installations, national cemeteries, all post offices, VA medical facilities, the World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the official offices of the secretaries of state, defense and veterans affairs, the director of the selective service system and the White House

September 30th is Gold Star Mother's Day as proclaimed by a Presidential Proclamation and approved by Congress in 1936. Please remember these Mothers and their children for the ultimate sacrifice they have made

## SEPTEMBERS Events

### **Judy Dorsey-National 1st VP**

My son Matthew, gave me the honor of becoming a Blue Star Mother when he graduated from Parris Island Marine Boot Camp in August of 2005. Matthew is the youngest of our three sons. After completing his contract with the Marines, he is now going to school at our local college, Stark State. Michael and his wife Becky, are the parents of our two grand sons, Cory and Tyler. Adam is our middle son, I have been married to my husband Mike, for 35 years and we live in Hartville Ohio a small community between Akron and Canton. My chapter is OH 2 Stars and Stripes, that

I served as the corresponding sec, 1st VP and am a PCP. I am also the current Blue to Gold for the Dept. of Ohio.

It was my honor to be elected as your National 1ST VP. Thank you all for your support and encouragement. I look forward to a wonderful and exciting year.



### **Cyndi Ventura-National 2nd VP**

I am the mother of 3 amazing young men and their father is my best friend in this world. We live in Holtsville, NY. My oldest son Jerry left home for Parris Island in December of 2007. He became a U.S Marine in March of 2008, and so began my journey as a Blue Star Mother. Then in June of 2009, my middle son Billy told me he was enlisting in the Marines. I thought, one child in was hard enough but two I just couldn't cope. But as a Mom we can't hold onto them forever, we have to let them go. So off went Billy to follow his dream. My youngest Dylan was now the only son I had home, I was smothering him and he was not happy. My husband saw an ad in our local paper, dialed the number, and instantly I felt a connection. Who but another Mom with her child in harm's way could understand? I joined Blue star Moms and within a month was the Financial Secretary, sending packages overseas, fundraising for our troops and veterans, visiting our VA and so much more. I had sisters, many of them who understood every feeling and fear I was going through. Then on April 23rd 2010 I got

that knock on my front door, my life, my families lives where forever changed. When you lose a child regardless of circumstances, you lose a piece of yourself and the future. That feeling can be paralyzing. I and my family were so very fortunate, to have this support system in the BLUE STAR FAMILIES, they were and still remain as a lifeline. All of their worst nightmares were happening. My Marine Cpl. Jerome D. Ventura, my oldest boy was gone, a fear each Blue Star lives with every day. These strong women and their families rallied around mine, taking care of us, making sure there was food and whatever was needed in my home, till we were once again able to do things for ourselves. How do you ever repay something like that? We are a support system for each other in NY6, we are a family, my child is their child and theirs mine. We chose to serve, just as our children do. Kindness is an inner desire that makes us want to do good things even if we do not get anything in return. It is the joy of our life to do them. When we do good things from this inner desire, there is kindness in everything we think, say, want, and do. I read this somewhere, I chose to live this way, and Jerry,

while always in my heart, lives on in all I do. It's this strength that gives me courage and confidence and makes me very proud to be Chapter President of NY6 and except the National 2nd VP position. I look forward to a wonderful year serving with all of you.



### **Teresa Bullock National 3rd VP**

An Army Veteran and a Blue and Gold Star Mother with an extensive military family background, I have been a member of SDNC BSM (CA9) since April of 2007. I has served as chapter "Blue to Gold" Liaison from August 2008 - 2011, served as President for CA9, currently I serve as 1st VP in CA9. This is my second term as the 3rd Vice President on the National Board, as well as 1st Vice President on the Inland Empire chapter of American Gold Star Mothers. "The Blue Star Mothers were there for me during my grief and struggle when my son, Army SSG Christopher Webb, was killed in

Iraq on March 7, 2007. I am grateful for the love and support I was given, as well as the support my youngest son, Army SPC Coy Bullock, received while he continued to serve in Iraq and Fort Hood after his brother's death. I know Chris would expect me to help the Blue and Gold Star families so that is the best way for me to keep his memory alive." I continue to make sure the sacrifice of our fallen heroes is never forgotten. I also volunteer at Loma Linda VA Medical Center, providing a 12-week class for families of veterans diagnosed with mental health issues such as PTSD, depression,

anxiety, and so on. "As 3d VP, I want to see our organization continue to grow, while preserving the principles and the mission this national organization was built on. During this year, it is important not only to continue our support of the military, veterans, their families, and the Gold Star families but to reach out and raise the community's awareness of the organization's existence and our mission. My prayer for each of you is that your loved ones are kept safe and sound, and that our organization continues to stay strong.



### **Ginger Novak-National 4th VP**



Just when I thought I was going to have to strangle him and bury his body in the woods, my son made me a Blue Star Mom! No kidding! He was drinking his way through a very good college and ignoring every piece of good advice his dad and I had given him. Many of you have tender stories of when your child chose to serve. Not me, sisters! That was nine years ago, and if the Marine Corps sent me a bill, I'd resent it, but I'd PAY it! My snot-nosed adolescent came back from Parris Island a man, and has never looked back. He's a Sergeant now, and married to a sweet and Godly young woman we are proud to call our daughter-in-law. They live at Twenty-Nine Palms CA, where he has been based for about two years. He served in Afghanistan last year, still loving his MOS, which is Motor Transportation.

His dad and I have been married for

almost 31 years, and have lived in four different cities, following his job. Now that he is retired, we live in Northern Kentucky, just a few minutes' drive south of the hotel where the 2012 BSMA Convention was held in Cincinnati, Ohio. By the way, start planning to do whatever you need to do to attend Convention in 2013—you will never regret taking advantage of the opportunity to meet your sisters in Blue Star Mothers. I am serving as your 4th Vice President, working with groups who want to become chapters. When I removed the documents from a new chapter out of my mailbox the other day, I hugged the envelope to my chest, grinning from ear to ear, because it meant I have at least five new sisters! I realized I needed Blue Star Mothers the first time Rick deployed. One of my friends, meaning to comfort me, said, "I know exactly how

you feel! My son is studying in Europe this semester." Yep—that's when I started looking for someone who knew what it was like to hear the phone ring and feel her pulse pounding before she could answer; for a friend who knew how to whistle through her teeth when I told her about a long-awaited promotion; for someone who gave me her cell phone number and meant it when she said she'd pick up even in the middle of the night if I needed her. I am so proud—and so fearful; so lonely, and yet I wouldn't change a thing! I cry while I hold a Veteran's weakening hand, praying that a future Blue Star Mom will do the same for my son when he is old. And I value you moms who are traveling this road with me. The tie that binds our hearts—the very lifeblood of our children—that's what makes us sisters. That is what makes us Blue Star Mothers.

### **Charilyn Damigo-National Recording Secretary**

I am from San Jose, CA, in the heart of Silicon Valley, where she has lived most of her life. She joined South Bay Blue Star Moms (BSMA CA4) in October, 2007, after her son Nathan, a United States Marine, lost three of his closest friends during his first deployment to Iraq. She realized then that she needed the support and friendship of other mothers who had experienced some of the same fears and stresses that she was facing.

She and her husband have five

children and five grandchildren. Her professional background is in banking and education. She has been a teacher and elementary principal for 25 years. She currently teaches at both the middle school and college levels. She also volunteers as a 1st Aid/CPR instructor for the American Red Cross and helped co-found a national non-profit organization (FAVA) on behalf of veterans and their families. This has been her passion during the last several years as she watched

her passion during the last several years as she watched the effects that PTSD has had on her son, now an incarcerated veteran.



### **Kathryn Venable-National Financial Secretary**

I am the mother of two military children, daughter, Jessica Horst who is an Air Force veteran and Son, SSgt Sonny Addison who is actively serving in the Army as a Recruiter in Anchorage, Alaska.

Since becoming a member of the SDNC Blue Star Mothers, CA Chapter 9 in August 2007 I have held the office of Chapter Treasurer and am the current Chapter President. I also served at National Treasurer from September

2008- August 2010.

My "day" job is working for the Nonprofit organization Trauma Intervention Programs of San Diego County, Inc. I am the current North County Crisis Team manager. My duties in this position are to oversee and support 80+ volunteers that respond to every day tragedies happening in a person's life. Prior to this position I was the Office Manager for TIP and also the San Diego Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

In my spare time, my passions are riding my motorcycle and

spending time with my grandsons.





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### Anne Parker- National Treasurer

I am a Blue Star Mother because of my two children, CPT Leigh Anne Swafford, DPT (physical therapist) who is currently the director of outpatient services at Fort Huachuca, AZ. She was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in May 2005 and went on to obtain her Master's and Doctorate before being assigned to Fort Hood from which she deployed to Iraq in 2009. She is married to CPT Andrew Lechanski, a Signal officer who commissioned in May 2007 and also deployed with her. He is currently in Afghanistan and his home base is Fort Huachuca. They are in the Army's Dual Career program. My son, CPT William Swafford, graduated from his Captain's Career Course in August 2012

and will be stationed at Fort Campbell, KY as a Military Intelligence officer. He is an Airborne Ranger and commissioned in May 2009. He was deployed to Afghanistan in 2009-10.

I currently am the co-owner/officer manager for a business my husband and I run in Longs, SC where we reside. We own a handyman service as a franchisee. My other careers have been medical officer manager, medical transcriptionist, and administrative assistant. I am active as the Treasurer for the North Strand Housing Shelter, a homeless shelter which gives preference to veterans and the Chairman of the Board of the North Strand Helping Hand, a local food bank. I am

active in the American Legion Auxiliary and am currently the Junior Vice President of the Department of South Carolina.

I founded my chapter, SC7, in February 2008 and continue to serve as President. I have served as National Historian in 2008-2009, National Finance Committee Chairman 2009-2010, and National Financial Secretary 2010-2012. I am currently the National Treasurer.

### Robin McCarthy-PNP and Chaplain

I am the mother of three children—Stephen, Nathan and Sarah—and both of my boys served in the U.S. Army (infantry) during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (respectively); I am also the grandmother of two beautiful children, Jason (in Chicago) and Bethany (now in Texas). My husband Mike and I reside in Dayton, Ohio, where Mike serves as a firefighter for the City of Dayton (his first day on that job was actually 9-11-2001). By day I am a hospice chaplain, and I work exclusively with veterans and their families. So you can see I am totally immersed in this vision and our mission 'to support our troops, our veterans, and the families of our fallen heroes.' It is at the very heart of who I am. I am also a veteran myself of the U.S. Army, having served in the early 70's during the Vietnam era (I was an MP then).

Since joining the Blue Star Mothers of America in 2006, I have served

as Chaplain for my Chapter (OH3), 3rd, 2nd, 1st VP for the Department of Ohio, elected to two terms as Department President (which put me on the NEB for two-and-a-half years), and I just completed a term as National President. At the request of NP Pat Soler, I will serve BSMA this year as National Chaplain. It continues to be an honor to be known as a Blue Star Mother, and I am excited about our new year in BSMA."

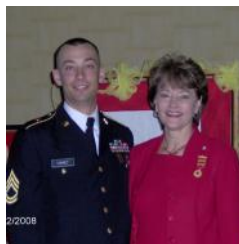




### Karen Stevens- PNP and National Finance Chair

I am founder and Past-President of New Mexico Chapter 1. Although I became a Blue Star Mother in May of 1999 when my son joined the Army I didn't know I was a Blue Star Mother! I found out about the organization in February, 2003 when I traveled to Ft Campbell, KY to say my goodbye's to my son prior to leaving for Iraq. Upon returning home I did my research of the organization, joined, started a local chapter and was elected to the National board where I continue to serve. My son, WO2 Michael Carney, has served four tours in Iraq, one in Korea, and stationed in Germany twice. So it's kind of hard to see him since joining the Army!

In addition to being involved with Blue Star Mothers, my husband and I own a set of cabins in Vallecito Colorado (come see us), I love to spend time with my eight grandchildren, hike, cross country ski and fish. I have two daughters who are married and live in Farmington, NM with five of my grandchildren. Michael and his wife



Kristi have my other three grandchildren so I don't get to spend as much time with them as the others so I cherish every minute I get to see them.

Having both a son in the military and a husband who is a Vietnam Veteran, I have come to realize how important it is to support one another as well as our veterans. I consider it an honor to serve on both the local and national level, an honor given to me by my son. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you, the confidence you have in me and for your support. I cherish each one of you and the relationships that we have established over the years.

## OCTOBERS PATRIOTIC EVENTS

October 13th - Happy 237th Birthday to the United States Navy. The United States Navy traces its origins to the Continental Navy, which the Continental Congress established on 13 October 1775.

F Jean Burlingame, BSMA Patriotic Instructor

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## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our Newsletter needs all chapters to get involved to be a success. So PLEASE send and share your stories and photos of what your chapters are doing in the upcoming weeks. If anyone has any suggestions or ideas for future issues please email me [bsm2vp@gmail.com](mailto:bsm2vp@gmail.com). The DEADLINE for Octobers issue is October 17th so please get me your stories and photos.....