The Gold Star Youth Mentorship Program pairs children of fallen military with currently serving members of our armed forces or recently separated veterans in a run focused mentorship. 60 children were accepted in five locations across the country, and successfully matched with a military mentor.

wear blue provides each registered surviving child a military mentor who provides an essential glimpse into the life of service that defined their fallen parent, while helping them develop healthy coping mechanisms and resilience. At no cost to the family, each child participating in the program receives a military mentor, quality running gear, expert coaching, inspiring military speakers, a military experience day, a meaningful community, Memorial Day tribute and run, and a closing Heroes’ Hike.

For Our Youth
With nearly 18,000 Gold Star and surviving youth in our country, over 15% of whom navigate long term, complex grief, there is a tangible need for sustained support. This complex grief, due to the sudden and violent death of a parent or sibling, can result in difficulty relating to peers or family members, suicidal ideation, declining academic performance, or general struggles with everyday tasks such as homework and routine chores. Community support consisting of understanding individuals, pride in loved one’s service, and a commitment to physical and emotional health are proven to lead to positive bereavement outcomes.

For Our Mentors
Military families navigate a challenging world, with frequent moves, a dynamic and dangerous work environment, and the challenges of reintegration after frequent deployments. Traumatic Brain injury has been identified in 19% of returning troops, depression in up to 25% of our troops, and Posttraumatic Stress disorder in up to 31% of our troops. Service members who believe that they have positive social support have less intense PTSD symptoms.

The Results

- 60 children participated in 5 locations:
  - DuPont, WA - Joint Base Lewis-McChord
  - Fayetteville, NC - Fort Bragg
  - Quantico, VA - Marine Corps Base Quantico
  - San Antonio, TX - Joint Base San Antonio
  - Spokane, WA - Fairchild AFB
- All 60 children were successfully matched with a currently serving or recently separated service member
- Children attended 10 weeks of 3-hour long mentorship sessions
- Children trained for and completed a Memorial Day 5K with the larger wear blue: run to remember community
- Program closed with a Heroes' Hike, featuring a hike, special military guest speaker, butterfly release, and awards ceremony, celebrating the success of the youth and mentor

Impact on Youth

- 100% of our youth increased their fitness from the beginning to the close of the program
- 100% of our youth agreed or strongly agreed that the GSYMP helped them feel a greater sense of pride in and connection to their fallen parents’ military service.
- 88% of our youth are more comfortable talking about their fallen parent because of the GSYMP
- Because of the GSYMP, 100% of our participants know that they have people outside their families who encourage and support them

Impact on Mentors

- 100% of our mentors feel that they had a positive impact on the life of a Gold Star Child
- 82% of our mentors feel that the GSYMP helped them develop healthy coping mechanisms to respond to the challenges of military life
- 90% of our mentors have a greater sense of self worth after serving as a mentor in the GSYMP
- 100% of our mentors have a better understanding of the GS and survivor community
- 71% of our mentors intend to return to next year’s GSYMP
- 100% of our mentors recommend the program to their peers

“This program gives me a sense of community, where my grief is accepted, and doesn’t need explanation. I am cared about, celebrated, and have so many amazing role models, including my mentor. It’s one of the things I look forward to the most, even though I’m not the strongest runner.”
**Mentors**

“I found the GSYMP by chance. Little did I know the profound impact my youth would have on my life. When I first met Katie and did our first run, I instantly knew that this was something that she needed and something that I needed. I had a rough transition back into normal life after deployment in 2019-2020. There was a hole that I didn’t know how to fill. The GSYMP has given me a way to feel connected to the people that we lost and honor their sacrifices. wear blue and the mentorship program has given me purpose again. I will forever be connected with Katie and her family; this is a gift I can never repay.”

“The GSYMP has helped me work through some of the struggles that accompany the military by giving me purpose.”

**Youth**

“The greatest impact the Gold Star Mentorship Program had on me was seeing and feeling the honor and respect the people had for the fallen soldiers and their kids. I definitely like how when we got together, it felt like a giant family who shares one goal: to remember the people/parents who lost their lives.”

“GSYMP has taught me to not give up, no matter how hard it is. When I feel like quitting, I will smile and remember my dad and what he had gone through.”

**Thank you to our donors for their support**

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weartblue run to remember.org

**wear blue exists for the fallen, for the fighting, and for the families.**