Healthy Start
Military Family Resource Center

3487 Santo Rd.
San Diego, CA. 92124
Military Family Context

- Military Family Stressors
- Deployment Cycles
- Special needs families
- Isolated
- Low income
- High incidence of child welfare service referrals
- Relationship Stress
Military Family Strengths

- Resourceful
- Family focused
- Linked to technology
- Strong ideals
- Well intentioned
- Giving
- Proud
- Resilient
Center Program Overview

- Case Management
- Crisis Intervention/Resource and Referral
- Parent Support and Empowerment Activities
- Parenting Education
- Dads on Duty
Dads On Duty
Dads On Duty History

- Started in 2008 with the help of the National Fatherhood Initiative
- 150 fathers served to date
- Locations
  - Murphy Canyon/Serra Mesa
Dads On Duty Overview

- Four Components
  - Community Outreach Events
  - Group Sessions
  - In Home Support
  - Parent to Parent Support
- Curriculum: 24/7 Dad and Parents As Teachers curriculum
- Community Partners
Program Case Study

Overwhelmed Parents Find Support System Through ‘SAY’ Agency

BY LESLIE FILSON

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Andy Thomas and his wife, Michele, needed help. Scared, first-time parents of twins, Thomas admits the couple didn’t know what to do after bringing two babies home from the hospital. “We were terrified,” he says.

Enter Social Advocates for Youth San Diego, a support agency that provides a variety of social services for 47,000 individuals a year, civilian and military alike. Through SAY San Diego’s Military Family Resource Center, Thomas found Dads on Duty, a support group for new military fathers.

“We are a bunch of guys who are new dads and all going through the same circumstances,” he says. “We’re kind of like Alcoholics Anonymous, but instead of alcoholics, we’re a bunch of new dads. We talk about the stresses of deployment and daycare issues. We talk about what to do when we never see the kids. We are a bunch of people in the exact situation.”

Child care and dinner are provided at the weekly meetings, giving Michele a well-deserved break from baby twins Jacob and Emily, Thomas adds.

“Aside from getting support, we learn that we are not the only people going through stuff like this and that is very reassuring,” Thomas says of the 12-week program. “We sometimes work 12- to 13-hour days. Sometimes we have to put duty before family even though family is our No. 1 priority.”

Helping people in need is what SAY is all about, says Michael Carr, executive director at the nonprofit.

“SAY can’t make the fear and the separation and disruption go away, but we can help kids, families and communities find the skills to deal with their circumstances, so kids can be kids, parents can be parents and families can support each other,” he says. Nhu Tran, Padres manager of community affairs, says the team is proud to support SAY San Diego for its work with military families.

ABOVE: Andy and Michele Thomas enjoy a visit to a park with their two children.
ABOVE/RIGHT: Children who have been helped by SAY programs show their thanks during a visit to PETCO Park.
Dads On Duty Outcomes

- Family Functioning/ Resiliency
  - 57% of fathers scored higher at post test (21% stayed the same)

- Social Support
  - 57% of fathers scored higher at post test (21% stayed the same)

- Concrete Support
  - 43% of fathers scored higher at post test (29% stayed the same) (*Due to the reflective nature of this item research shows participants often overinflate confidence in this area at pre test).

- Child Development/ Knowledge of Parenting
  - 79% of fathers scored higher at post test (14% stayed the same)

- Nurturing and Attachment
  - 71% scored higher at post test (7% stayed the same)
Dads On Duty Outcomes

- **Satisfaction:**
  - 86% of participants state the group meetings have been VERY HELPFUL.
  - 94% of participants would VERY LIKELY recommend fatherhood group meetings to another family.
Dads On Duty Outcomes

Participants have said:

- “I can't believe how awesome this group is, and it's free!”
- “Thanks to Dads On Duty, I now understand that when my 2 year old says “No!” it’s not because she’s trying to irritate me.”
- “I’m mandated to go to certain groups, but this is the only voluntary one I attend, and it happens to be my favorite!”
- "I am more attentive to the needs of my family and have been able to recognize more cues that my child gives me when he needs/wants something or when something is the matter."
- "I am starting to calm down some and think about my actions prior to carrying them out when experiencing difficulties with my wife and children."
- "I listen to my son and don't yell so much. I learned how to be a better father."
Dads on Duty Impact

- Over 100 new fathers served
- Three locations
  - South Bay
  - Camp Pendleton
  - Murphy Canyon/Serra Mesa
- In home support
  - Parents As Teachers
- Dads On Duty Alumni Group
- Expanded Outcome/Results Info