



2020 IMPACT REPORT



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS



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Survivors Helping Survivors Heal



In 2020, a challenging year for the world, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) stood strong with the families of America's Fallen Heroes to ensure uninterrupted, around the clock emotional support, casework assistance, opportunities to connect with others in a virtual environment, and ongoing access to grief and trauma resources.

The global pandemic has had a significant impact on all of us, especially those struggling to cope with grief and trauma following the death of our military loved one. TAPS has transitioned and expanded our initiatives, resources, and support to virtual platforms to stay connected with our military families while following safety guidelines.

In our 27 years, America has relied on TAPS as the subject matter experts in providing compassionate care to all those grieving the death of a military loved one. Our country has supported us as we have sustained family separations, wounds, and loss as a result of our loved one's service during times of war. The lessons we have learned over nearly three decades of work in grief and loss are also applicable to our first responders, healthcare workers, and all of our fellow citizens who have been affected by isolation, fear, and loss associated with COVID-19. To support all Americans impacted, TAPS has compiled a comprehensive set of resources to bring hope and healing to our wounded nation.

Last year, we connected with 7,583 newly bereaved loved ones, adding to more than 100,000 surviving family members currently receiving support from TAPS. That was an average of 21 new survivors – every day.

We shared our experience and expertise, conducting nearly 250 training sessions on grief, trauma, and suicide pre/postvention for military commands, corporations, and professionals across America each year.

This 2020 Impact Report tells our story, and reflects the continued and growing need to provide care and resources to those grieving the death of a military loved one. Care and resources only TAPS can provide.

We are proud of our top ratings with charity watch groups and remain committed to fiscal integrity. Currently, 88-cents of every dollar donated to TAPS is invested directly into programs to support all those grieving the death of a military loved one.

TAPS is honored to have the support of caring Americans who understand service and sacrifice, and stand shoulder to shoulder with the families of those who have died in defense of freedom.

With gratitude,

Bonnie Carroll

TAPS President and Founder

50,320+
Survivor
CONNECTIONS WITH THE TAPS
COMMUNITY IN 2020



1,500+
volunteers spent 69,000+
hours supporting the
TAPS mission

★ **2020 TAPS YEAR IN REVIEW** ★

7,583
NEW SURVIVORS
GRIEVING DEATH OF

3,006
MILITARY LOVED ONES
CONNECTED WITH TAPS IN 2020

30%

of all new TAPS survivors
are grieving the death
of their parent

21 
NEW
SURVIVORS
CONNECT
WITH TAPS
**EACH
DAY**

TAPS IS HERE
24/7
FOR ALL WHO GRIEVE THE
DEATH OF THEIR MILITARY
loved one



SURVIVOR SERVICES

- 8 Survivor Care Team
- 10 Casework Assistance and Education Support
- 11 Policy Achievements
- 12 Caregiver to Survivor
- 13 Suicide Pre/Postvention

SURVIVOR PROGRAMS

- 14 Military and Legacy Mentors
- 17 TAPS Community Support
- 18 TAPS Programs
- 24 TAPS International

ABOUT TAPS

- 25 Board of Directors
 - 28 Funding
-
-

WE *provide*
COMFORT, CARE,
AND RESOURCES TO
ALL THOSE GRIEVING
THE DEATH OF A
MILITARY LOVED ONE.
WE *honor*
OUR MILITARY MEN
AND WOMEN BY
CARING FOR ALL
THOSE THEY
LOVED AND
LEFT BEHIND.



TAPS VALUES

How we heal

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we are a family of military survivors ready to embrace and connect all who grieve the death of a military loved one with resources, services, and programs. TAPS provides support to survivors regardless of the manner of death, the duty status at the time of death, the survivor's relationship to the deceased, or the survivor's phase in their grief journey. In 2020, we opened our hearts and resources to the world with our award-winning programs and services through our resources to support all bereaved. TAPS is fortunate to work with leading experts in the field of grief, bereavement, trauma, and peer support to integrate decades of research on military grief into action to help heal hearts.

At TAPS we:

- 1 HONOR AND REMEMBER:** We cherish the life of our fallen heroes and celebrate military survivors as the living legacies of their loved ones' service and sacrifice.
- 2 EMPOWER:** We empower survivors with healthy coping tools, resources, and opportunities to connect in the comfort of their home, their community, their region, and the nation to grow with their grief.
- 3 CONNECT:** We connect all those grieving a military death 24/7 to a nationwide network of peer-based emotional survivor support and critical casework assistance.
- 4 EDUCATE:** We inform and educate using research-informed best practices in bereavement and trauma care for survivors and advocate on behalf of survivors with policy and legislative priorities.
- 5 CREATE COMMUNITY:** We build community with survivors to provide comprehensive comfort, care, and resources where they live when they need it, and in a manner comfortable for them.

CORE SERVICES

Peer-Based Emotional Support

24/7 National Military
Survivor Helpline

Community-Based Care

Casework Assistance



★ TAPS RESPONSE

Together

Military survivors report COVID-19 has impacted their grief journey because they are now facing:

- ★ Social distancing, physical distancing, and isolation while in grief
- ★ Living in isolation without their loved one
- ★ Delays in benefits

SURVIVORS REPORTED CHALLENGES WITH THEIR INABILITY TO

- ★ Engage in grief rituals
- ★ Host and attend funerals
- ★ Commemorate grief milestones
- ★ Connect with mental health professionals for themselves or their children

TOP 4 MOST UTILIZED TAPS RESOURCES

- ★ TAPS Quarterly Magazine
- ★ TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® (live and recorded)
- ★ TAPS weekly articles, blog posts, and eNewsletters
- ★ TAPS Virtual Care Groups

MOST REQUESTED RESOURCES

- ★ Mental Health Resources
- ★ Financial assistance
- ★ Resources on parenting, homeschooling, and education

Programming in Similar Groups

- ★ Relationship to Deceased | Manner of Death | Generation Level

Programming on Topics

- ★ Normalize the grief experience | Trauma & Loss | Use of Medication
- Heartbreak | Navigating Life Pre/Post Loss | Sleep & Anxiety

Tangible and Practical Tools

- ★ Manage Money | Nutrition | Tools to Integrate for Coping



Federal Response to COVID-19
Summary of benefits affecting military families

A Network of Hope
Connections to vetted organizations for support

TAPS Response to COVID-19
Compiled resources from TAPS and our valued partners

The TAPS Daily
The latest news, resources, and thought pieces from across the military and veteran community

TAPS Response Landing Page
Resources and archived materials to help everyone during this time



62% of military survivors responding to the survey are not eligible for government survivor benefits following the death of their military loved one



39% reported a decrease in income, in some cases because they are small business owners or have lost their jobs



47% of survivors with children noticed a decrease in their child's school performance since the start of COVID

COVID-19 RESPONSE

At TAPS, we are no stranger to challenging times. We are doing our part to support one another and stay connected. As the world faced a global pandemic, TAPS opened our hearts and knowledge to share resources and tools with the world. Below is a timeline highlighting some of the programs and services we launched immediately to support military survivors with our world-class expertise in peer-based emotional support. Just like our military stands at the ready, TAPS is here 24/7 for immediate response to unprecedented times.

“There are a million ways that TAPS has supported me. Presence and Compassion. I truly feel the love from TAPS.”

—Military surviving spouse

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

March

- 13 PRESIDENT TRUMP DECLARES COVID-19 A NATIONAL EMERGENCY
- 18 TAPS TALKS LAUNCHED SHARING COPING TOOLS AND CONNECTED OVER 3,800 SURVIVORS IN THE SAFETY OF THEIR HOMES
- 24 TAPS MILITARY MENTOR PROGRAM LAUNCHES WEEKLY VIRTUAL MEET-UPS TO KEEP MILITARY MENTORS CONNECTED
- 27 TAPS YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM LAUNCHES YOUNG ADULTS VIDEO CHATS CONNECTING SURVIVING 18 - 25-YEAR-OLDS
- 31 TAPS LAUNCHES SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MILITARY SURVIVORS

April

- 3 TAPS LAUNCHES TAPS.ORG/COVID
- 7 TAPS.ORG/COVID/GOVERNMENT RESOURCES LAUNCHES
- 8 TAPS SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT LAUNCHES FACEBOOK LIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES AND CELEBRITIES TO CONNECT WITH MILITARY SURVIVORS WITH VIEWERSHIP REACHING OVER 276,998
- 9 TAPS DAILY LAUNCHES
- 14 TAPS WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT LAUNCHES ENHANCED VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING
- 27 TAPS.ORG RESOURCES FOR THE AMERICAN PUBLIC LAUNCHES

May

- 8 TAPS VIRTUAL NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVORS SEMINAR AND FAMILY PROGRAM WEBSITE GOES LIVE
- 15 BONNIE CARROLL APPEARS ON CNN TO ANNOUNCE TAPS RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO AN AUDIENCE OF 2.1 MILLION VIEWERS
- 19 TAPS WELCOMES MILITARY SURVIVORS AT THE VIRTUAL NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND FAMILY PROGRAM
- 25 TAPS FEATURED ON CNN IN HONOR OF MEMORIAL DAY TO SHARE THE HONOR AND REMEMBRANCE OF OUR NATION'S FALLEN TO AN AUDIENCE OF OVER 65.9 MILLION PEOPLE

June

- 12 TAPS WELCOMES MILITARY SURVIVORS VIRTUALLY AT A MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND FAMILY PROGRAM

July

- 1 TAPS MILITARY MENTORS LAUNCH FLAT MENTOR TO CONNECT WITH GRIEVING MILITARY CHILDREN VIRTUALLY
- 9 TAPS YOUTH PROGRAMS LAUNCH THE TAPS SUMMER PROGRAM: TAPS GOOD GRIEF CAMP AND FAMILY CAMP AT HOME WELCOMING MILITARY SURVIVING FAMILIES TO CONNECT AND BUILD FAMILY BONDS FROM HOME

August

- 21 TAPS WELCOMES MILITARY SURVIVORS VIRTUALLY AT A MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND FAMILY PROGRAM
- 25 TAPS SUICIDE PRE/POSTVENTION TEAM WELCOMES SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVORS NEW IN THEIR GRIEF AT THE VIRTUAL FALL NEW TO SUICIDE LOSS PEER SUPPORT GROUP

September

- 5 TAPS LAUNCHES A VIRTUAL NEW TO GRIEF SEMINAR SPECIFICALLY FOR SURVIVORS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THEIR GRIEF JOURNEY
- 20 TAPS OUTDOORS LAUNCHES VIRTUAL BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO CONNECT MILITARY SURVIVORS IN NATURE #TAPSOUTDOORS

October

- 9 TAPS HOSTS THE 12TH ANNUAL NATIONAL MILITARY SUICIDE SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND FAMILY PROGRAM VIRTUALLY
- 12 TEAM TAPS VIRTUALLY CELEBRATES IT'S 20TH YEAR WELCOMING SURVIVORS TO RUN IN HONOR OF A FALLEN MILITARY LOVED ONE
- 27 TAPS YOUTH PROGRAMS HOSTS A VIRTUAL CARE GROUP FOR GRIEVING MILITARY PARENTS OF GRIEVING MILITARY CHILDREN
- 31 TAPS SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT HOSTS FIRST VIRTUAL SALUTE TO SERVICE OF THE SEASON

November

- 1 TAPS YOUTH PROGRAMS HOSTS VIRTUAL YOUTH CARE GROUPS FOR GRIEVING MILITARY CHILDREN
- 1 TAPS SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT WELCOMES 959 SURVIVORS AT 27 NFL SALUTE TO SERVICE ENGAGEMENTS
- 12 TAPS YOUTH PROGRAMS WELCOMES TEENS AT THE FIRST VIRTUAL TEEN COFFEE HOUR

DECEMBER

- 31 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT HOSTS FINAL VIRTUAL EVENT OF THE OF THE YEAR WELCOMING OVER 3,242 WOMEN ALL YEAR WITH COURAGE, RESILIENCE, AND HOPE

★ SURVIVOR SERVICES

SHARE THE JOURNEY

Survivor Care Team

At the frontline of our survivor support is our Survivor Care Team - caring, dedicated professionals who are survivors themselves. Our team provides inclusive and professional peer-based emotional support to embrace, engage, and empower survivors throughout their grief journey. Our care is appropriate, effective, and proven to enhance the quality of life for all those who are grieving the death of a loved one whose life included military service. Our team members listen and connect survivors with appropriate resources specific to their individual needs, and lay the foundation for a lifelong connection between each survivor and TAPS.

“ Every note, every call, every voicemail, every single bit of outreach from TAPS gives me a small break in the day to catch my breath and lighten the load.”

—Military survivor thanking Survivor Care Team for outreach

351,697

minutes connecting and comforting military survivors

2,701

customized Resource Kits sent to military survivors

66,300+

birthday and anniversary cards sent to survivors

174,000+

copies of the quarterly TAPS Magazine delivered free to military survivors and supporters

577

Peer Mentors provided comfort, care, and support to TAPS Survivors by hosting Virtual and In-Person connections

Peer Mentors

Regardless of where you call home, a military loss is an emotional journey shared among survivors across the country. In addition to our larger seminars and camps, we also connect survivors with each other in their hometowns through specialized resource guides, local TAPS groups, and peer-based support.

We know the most impactful way to care for our survivors is to empower each other. We train adult survivors who are at least 18 months beyond their own loss, and at a healthy point in their grief journey, to volunteer and support another newly bereaved survivor.

“ Being very new in my grief, I am thankful for my Peer Mentor. We check in with each other twice a week. It is so comforting to know I can reach out and connect with someone who has experienced a loss like this. The support is very healing. Thank you!” — Survivor response to TAPS Talk: The Power of Peer Mentoring

TAPS is here 24/7

Staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, our National Military Survivor Helpline is the only 24/7 helpline for all who are grieving the loss of their military loved one. All callers are immediately connected with a live-answer caring TAPS professional. In 2020, TAPS responded to survivors calling for casework assistance, emotional support to include concerns regarding COVID-19, their experience with military grief, and requesting information to connect with other TAPS programs.

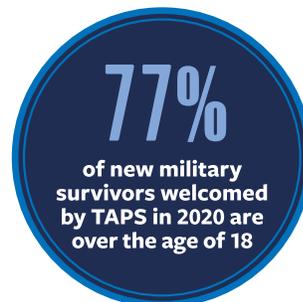
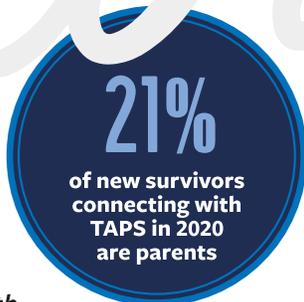


“ My grief is the most difficult journey I have ever experienced. Having the TAPS Helpline has saved my life. It has given me hope and helps me through the darkness.”

—Military survivor sharing gratitude for TAPS 24/7 Helpline support

GROWING WITH GRIEF

The number of new survivors connecting with TAPS each year continues to rise. We are preparing to increase the number of our Survivor Care Team staff, with an emphasis on those grieving a death by illness, suicide, and all relationships to the deceased.

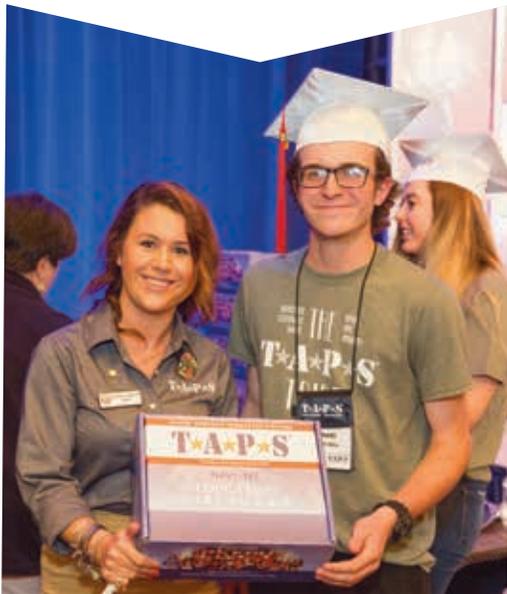


TAPS connected with **10%** more newly bereaved military survivors in 2020 than in 2019

6,729 cases resolved

\$3.9 M in retroactive benefits secured for military survivors by TAPS Casework Assistance Team

\$180 million in education benefits



CONNECTING SURVIVORS WITH BENEFITS

In a time of immense grief, survivors often face piles of paperwork that must be completed to access resources and benefits. Our Casework and Education Support Services team advocates for survivors to address the complexity of these immediate needs. Survivors turn to us with questions relating to funeral honors, benefits, financial hardships, and legal concerns. They often need help obtaining records, official documents, and reports. They also desire to understand the education benefits and scholarships available to them. Third-party entities - like other national service organizations, government agencies, and funeral homes - also connect new military surviving families directly to our Casework and Education Support Services.



Survivor Support

Supporting survivors of a military death through the complexities after the loss of their loved one

Official Papers | Employment Headstone | Healthcare Investigations | Line of Duty Legal Cases | Medals Personal Effects | Survivor Flags



Financial Assistance

Providing emergency financial support in their greatest time of need

Groceries | Mortgage/Rent Post-Mortem Cleaning Travel Costs | Moving Expenses Clothing | School Supplies Holiday Support | Tutoring



Retroactive Benefits

Retroactive benefits awarded to survivors with the support of TAPS Casework Assistance Team

DFAS (SBP, SSIA, AOP) VA (DIC and Survivor Pension) OSGLI (SGLI and SGLI-DE)

Education Support Services

For survivors pursuing secondary education, we align their educational goals with federal, state, and private benefits and scholarships to minimize out-of-pocket expenses. We are recognized for our expertise in identifying, aligning, and maximizing survivors' educational goals with benefits and resources. The demand for our support is increasing. Additionally, we provide each graduating high school senior and incoming college freshmen with customized Education Resource Reports that provide on-campus resources, along with a personalized report of federal, state, and private education benefits and scholarships available.

IN HONOR OF THEIR SERVICE

TAPS has a constituency of over 500,000 survivors of military and veteran loss in the nation. Every survivor in the United States is a beneficiary of the critical advocacy work that TAPS does to raise public awareness. We work closely in a nonpartisan effort with both the Executive and Legislative Branches of government.

TAPS was instrumental in working with Congress to finally eliminate the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) / Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset or “Widow’s Tax.” For over four decades, as many as 65,000 surviving spouses were denied their service members’ earned benefits, an average loss of \$925 a month or \$11,000 annually. The Widow’s Tax repeal became law on December 20, 2019, and will be phased out over three years beginning January 2021. Future generations of surviving spouses will receive their full survivor benefits, amounting to millions of dollars in benefit payments.

2021 GOALS

RECOGNIZE all who served and died regardless of how or where the death occurred

ADVOCATE for illness loss survivors and veterans of toxic exposure

ADVANCE suicide prevention and postvention policies

INCREASE Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

RETAIN benefits upon remarriage

IMPROVE death gratuity to align with intended purpose

PRESERVE and enhance survivor benefits

STRENGTHEN educational support for surviving families

TAPS Advocates For All Military Survivors

- 1 **Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Act Unanimously Passes Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs** - After two years of tireless work by TAPS and fellow TEAM Coalition, this landmark bill, introduced by Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC), will improve healthcare and benefits for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances. An important first step to passing comprehensive toxic exposure legislation, with potential impact to 2.7 million service members who have deployed since 9/11.
- 2 **Toxic Exposure at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base, Uzbekistan Study Signed Into Law** - TAPS and fellow TEAM members helped pass this critical legislation, which requires the Secretary of Defense to conduct a study on toxic exposure of service members stationed at K2 Air Base between 2001-2005. More than 15,000 veterans may have been exposed to toxicants at the base.
- 3 **Three New Agent Orange Diseases Added to VA List of Presumptive Service-Connection** - Congress passed the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which became law on January 1, 2021. Roughly 34,000 Vietnam-era Veterans diagnosed with hypothyroidism, bladder cancer, or Parkinson’s-like symptoms will now have access to disability compensation and health care services. TAPS advocated for this long overdue improvement.
- 4 **The Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act Signed Into Law** - TAPS proudly supported this groundbreaking bipartisan legislation, introduced by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), which improves mental health care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and includes grants to groups outside of the VA that are focused on helping veterans. Nearly 18 veterans die by suicide every day and of those 11 veterans are not receiving treatment or care from the VA.
- 5 **COVID-19 Benefits for Active Duty Servicemembers, the Reserve Components, and their Survivors Act of 2020** - This important legislation, spearheaded by TAPS, expands survivor benefits for National Guard members who are activated under federal orders in response to COVID-19. As many as 96,521 National Guard troops have been activated for COVID-19, civil unrest, and natural disasters.
- 6 **Cheryl Lankford Memorial Act Included in National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and Signed into Law** - The amendment introduced by Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN-3) and Dr. Phil Roe (R-TN-1) ensures that Casualty Assistance Officers are assigned to dependent children in the case a surviving spouse subsequently passes. TAPS spearheaded this initiative, which will benefit thousands of current and future military surviving families.
- 7 **Fry Scholarship Improvement Act Passes Congress** - TAPS led this effort impacting over 1,000 surviving spouses and children of National Guard and Reserve who will see increased education benefits.



WHEN A CAREGIVER BECOMES A SURVIVOR, WE'RE HERE

As the nation's home for survivors across all manners of death, we are ever mindful of the unique needs specific to survivors who were once caregivers. By partnering with organizations in and outside of government, we are working collaboratively to implement a life-altering program that warmly transitions caregivers to survivors. Many of our survivors grieve a military loved one who died from an illness in connection with exposures to toxins. With the significant increase in the number of survivors impacted by exposures, we are also actively representing these families with advocacy work that will improve services and benefits for those affected.



30% of all new 2020 military survivors connected with TAPS grieve the death of their loved one by illness

Of all survivors grieving the death of a military loved one who died by an illness and responded to our national military loss by illness survey,

67%

of survivors reported their service member required a caregiver

57%

of service members were diagnosed with a form of cancer prior to passing away

41%

of survivors who's loved ones served post-9/11 reported they were initially misdiagnosed

WHAT WE ARE DOING

LEADING a campaign to increase public awareness

LEARNING more about the crisis through survivors

SUPPORTING the needs of caregivers and survivors

PARTNERING with organizations to create a Caregiver to Survivor Program

“ Thank you to our TAPS family, for your work on behalf of toxic exposures in countries our loved ones served in. Their exposures take our loved ones too soon and leaves us feeling lost, helpless, and questioning ‘why’.”

—Military illness loss survivor in response to TAPS national military illness loss survivor survey

A PARTNER IN GROWTH

We have supported more than 16,400 suicide loss survivors and developed a best-practice Suicide Postvention Model™. Our Suicide Pre-/Postvention team provides comfort, care, and resources specific to suicide loss survivors, coordinates and hosts the only National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp, hosts training on suicide prevention, and provides insight and consultations on best practices in suicide pre-/postvention techniques.



The annual National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp has been recognized by the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs, the American Association of Suicidology and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention as a crucial healing event for those who have experienced the death of a military loved one by suicide. In 2020, we hosted our 12th annual National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar virtually and welcomed over 330 suicide survivors. We also provided a safe and stable community for newly bereaved suicide survivors to connect virtually with our New Suicide Loss Support Group that met every week for 8 weeks and shared hope with 92 new suicide loss survivors.

TAPS has cultivated partnerships with the Healing After Suicide Loss (HASL) Conference, the U.S. Marine Corps Behavioral Health Program, and the Home Base Intensive Clinical Program, monitored by the Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry.

Training

Our experts presented 113 trainings to organizations in 2020 that outlined best practices in suicide prevention, trauma-informed care, and grief support. Several of our courses were broadly disseminated through the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®.

“ We have missed our hugs at TAPS events this year but honestly, my children and I got a chance to process our grief together at the virtual TAPS events in a way we never have before, even in family therapy.”

—Military suicide surviving spouse

Consultations and Thought Leadership

We provide expert consultation on suicide awareness, prevention, intervention, and postvention. Our expertise is frequently called upon by military units, service academies, veteran service organizations, news companies, business corporations, U.S. city administrations, grieving families, and more. In 2020 we supported over 170 requests for evidence-informed best practices on suicide pre-/postvention initiatives.

67%

of newly bereaved suicide loss survivors experienced an increase in hope after attending the 2020 Virtual New Suicide Loss Support Group

2,300+

new military suicide loss survivors connected with TAPS in 2020

31%

of all new 2020 military survivors connecting with TAPS grieve a military loved one who died by suicide in 2020

“ We don’t get to choose tragedy, but we do get to choose healing and I am very proud to be healing with TAPS.”

—Master Sergeant Melissa Simpson, TAPS 2020 Military Mentor of the Year

700+

Mentors engaged with surviving military families virtually and in-person in 2020

94%

of mentors intend to serve as a Military Mentor again

TAPS anticipates needing to attract and retain

1,500

members of the military to serve as Military Mentors to grieving military children in 2021

IN HONOR OF THEIR SERVICE

Mentorship by adult role models is key for our military surviving children. Military Mentors are active duty service members or veterans of the Armed Forces who selflessly volunteer their time to make a one-on-one connection with a grieving child at a TAPS Youth Program.

Survey

The majority of Military Mentors are often living with their own grief and connected with TAPS in honor of their own fallen military brothers, sisters, and family members.

WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING ASPECT OF SERVING AS A TAPS MILITARY MENTOR?

- 1 To make a difference in the life of a grieving military child
- 2 Honoring the life and legacy of a fellow service member or veteran
- 3 Supporting the needs of caregivers and survivors
- 4 Improved personal outlook on life



2020 TAPS MILITARY MENTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Presented to Master Sgt. Melissa Simpson, United States Air Force

The TAPS Military Mentor of the Year Award recognizes outstanding support for the children of America’s fallen heroes.

“ Melissa Simpson is a ray of sunshine for all of our TAPS kids and personally to me. Between her dolphin noises and her infectious laugh, she is able to create a warm and inviting space for our kids, this is priceless for our families. Melissa finds connection with everyone she meets and is the most understanding and accepting person I know!”

—Megan Lopez, National Program Director, National Alliance for Grieving Children



71%

of TAPS Military Mentors reported they volunteer in honor of a Battle Buddy

70%

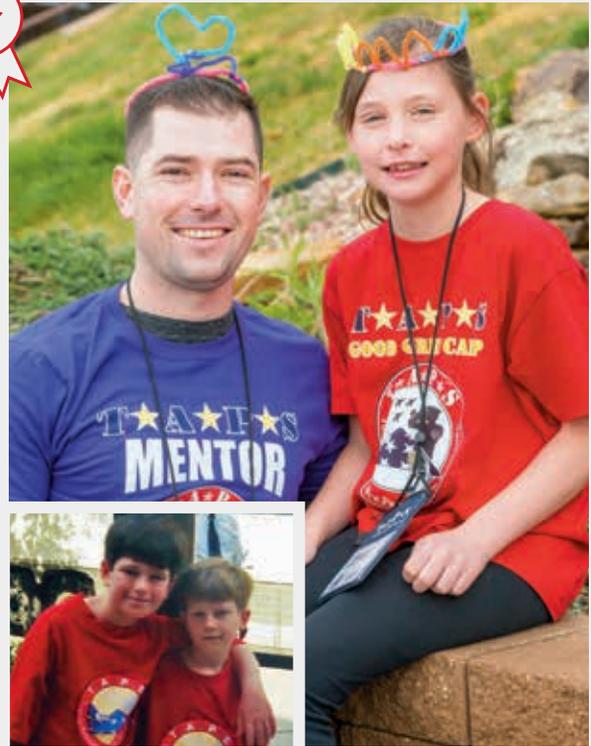
of Mentors surveyed in 2020 reported they have served in combat post 9/11 with the majority having served in Operation Iraqi Freedom

93%

of Mentors surveyed in 2020 reported they would recommend the TAPS Military Mentor program to a fellow service member or surviving military family

Legacy Mentors

Legacy Mentors are very special mentors for our military children survivors. Legacy Mentors are survivors who have attended TAPS Good Grief Camps as a surviving military child and have now graduated and returned to mentor younger survivors. The Legacy Mentors represent how the community of TAPS has walked alongside them to remember the love, celebrate life, and share the journey.



2020 TAPS SENATOR TED STEVENS LEADERSHIP AWARD

Presented to Captain Nathaniel Lee,
United States Space Force

In 1997, Captain Donald Lee and his co-pilot were killed in a training accident when their Apache helicopter crashed. Captain Lee left behind a wife, Theresa, and two sons, Nathaniel, age 7, and Sam, age 5. Following Captain Lee's death, his family connected with TAPS. Today, Nathaniel is a Captain in the United States Space Force and is married with two children of his own. After 20 years, Nathaniel still thinks of his father every day. He volunteers as a Legacy Mentor and Group Leader for children who have also lost a loved one who served in the military.

“I avoided talking about my dad because nobody truly understood what our military life was all about. At the TAPS Good Grief Camp, for the first time, I was comfortable talking about my father - sharing his story, honoring his memory, and expressing how his loss impacted me. TAPS gave me the freedom to laugh and cry.”

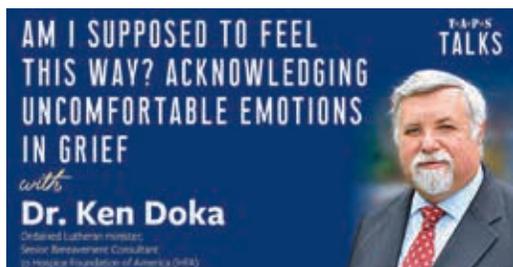
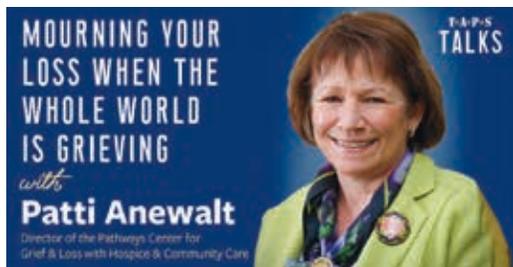
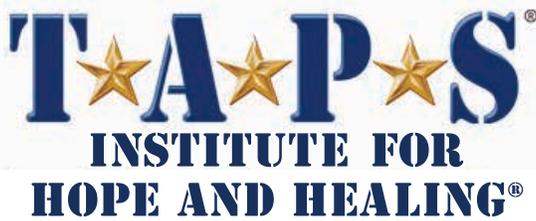


CONNECTING WITH EXPERTS

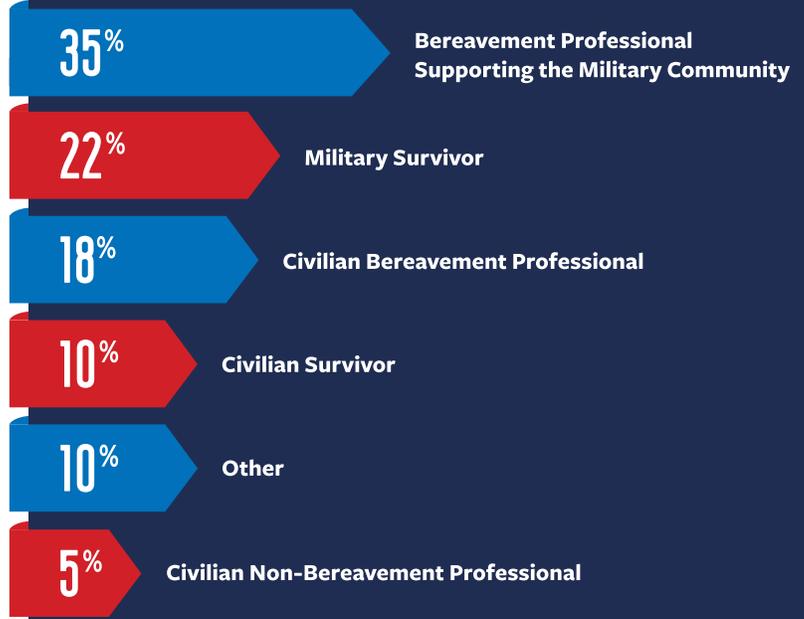
The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® empowers the bereaved and enhances the expertise of professionals caring for the bereaved through grief, resilience, and wellness education. In 2020, 14,039 individuals connected with the TAPS Institute for training. Courses included: Is it Depression or is it Grief?; Helping Grievors Cope with Guilt, Anger, and Other Difficult Emotions; I'm Losing Him Before He's Gone: Coping with Anticipatory Grief; and You, Me, Us: Supporting Couples After the Death of a Child.

A sought-after resource around the world, the Institute features insightful programs and training delivered by experts in their fields. The Institute selects presenters from our highly skilled and credentialed staff, members of our Advisory Board, and nationally and internationally recognized professionals based on their expertise on grief and loss, wellness, resilience, and posttraumatic growth. The Institute provides courses and continuing education to survivors, social workers, nurses, funeral directors, casualty officers, chaplains, grief professionals, trauma counselors, and others.

“TAPS is a lamp in the darkness of grief, illuminating each step of the journey with compassionate support, wise guidance, and an understanding that each person on the path grieves in their own way. The multi-disciplinary community of professionals and volunteers understands the nuances and complexities of grief and offers a wide range of expertise to survivors and professionals alike. Whether empowering bereaved individuals to cope with difficult emotions or educating grief professionals on best practices, TAPS delivers grief and loss education with compassion and integrity.” — Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT, TAPS Advisory Board



Who registers for Institute programs?



OUR SUPPORT, RIGHT NEXT DOOR

Care Groups

Facilitated by a Peer Mentor, our local grief support groups, known as Care Groups, provide opportunities for survivors grieving all manners of death and all relationships to the deceased to connect both in-person or virtually. These TAPS Care Groups offer emotional support and camaraderie for military survivors to build lasting relationships based on shared experiences.

Community Resource Reports

We prepare Community Resource Reports for military survivors by contacting local bereavement groups, parenting support groups, and community organizations. Each report is specific to the survivor's local community, their relationship to their military loved one, and the manner of death they are grieving.

Counseling Connections

We deliver comfort close to home through access to local grief support services, free clinical counseling, and online support. Our counseling connections staff use their training and networks to link survivors to local grief support resources and mental health professionals.

TAPS Togethers

We unite fellow survivors together around an activity or local social setting to help survivors build their new normal. At TAPS Togethers, survivors connect and meet other military survivors within their local community to share strength and hope. In 2020, TAPS Togethers welcomed survivors to attend the Brene' Brown session titled: *Dare to Lead* where survivors connected to enhance their personal and professional leadership skills.

“I loved being connected to TAPS friends again. I have learned so much from talking to others and hearing their stories on how they grow with grief and in life.”

—Military survivor connecting with
TAPS Togethers: Dare to Lead



403
CARE GROUPS

1,896
SURVIVORS

160
TAPS TOGETHERS

4,800+
SURVIVORS

1,819
SURVIVORS CONNECTED WITH
ONE-ON-ONE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
THROUGH COUNSELING CONNECTIONS



3,319

Military survivors attended 8 National and Regional virtual and in-person seminars in 2020



148

Survivors attended the first virtual New to Grief Seminar specific for survivors who are new to their grief journey



96%

of attending survivors learned new information at TAPS seminars to help them cope with their grief



78%

of attending survivors experienced a sense of belonging to the larger TAPS family at a 2020 TAPS seminar



TAPS VIRTUAL SEMINARS

★ SURVIVOR PROGRAMS

TAPS survivors build community, connect with experts, and experience hope when attending a TAPS survivor seminar. Each year, TAPS welcomes all military survivors at our regional and national seminars to offer support and connections to surviving loved ones in all phases of their grief journey. TAPS seminars are safe spaces for survivors to share stories of their military loved ones and experience a community of hope and healing. In response to the global pandemic of COVID-19, TAPS transitioned this one-of-a-kind military survivor programming to welcome survivors virtually.

TOP THREE MOST POPULAR WORKSHOPS AT A TAPS SEMINAR:

- 1 Traumatic Loss: Understanding and Healing
- 2 Rooted in Hope, Connected in Love
- 3 Integration and Inspiration: TAPS Women's Empowerment Program

47%

increase in survivor registrations for virtual seminars versus in-person seminars

TOP THREE REASONS SURVIVORS ATTEND SEMINARS:

- 1 To connect with other survivors who share a similar loss
- 2 To find hope
- 3 To learn coping skills from TAPS workshops

A LIFETIME OF HEALING

The death of military loved ones leave behind survivors of all ages.

We help our young survivors build a community of support to grow with grief. At our youth programs, children engage in activities to facilitate grief processing and connect with other young survivors. Children, teens, and families learn how to talk openly about their loss, recognize ways of coping, build positive coping tools, and share their feelings. The hallmark of our youth programming is our Good Grief Camp, where children ages 4 to 18 are connected with mentors to guide them in their grief journey. With children under 4, we provide Early Childhood programs for age-appropriate activities.

23%

of new TAPS survivors in 2020 are under the age of 18



2,723

military survivors under the age of 18 engaged with TAPS in 2020

MAJOR TRENDS AMONG SURVIVING MILITARY CHILDREN ENGAGING WITH TAPS IN 2020:

- 1 71% grieving the death of their parent
- 2 31% are grieving the death of their military loved one who died by suicide
- 3 62% are between the ages of 7 - 17
- 4 46% are within the first year of their loss



Camps

Held throughout the year alongside our Seminars, Good Grief Camps provide youth ages 4 to 18 with a supportive place to share and learn coping skills through games, crafts, and other activities. Each child is paired with a Military or Legacy Mentor, and children also make valuable connections with their peers. Our parents report their children to have a sense of belonging with their TAPS Family. They feel like they are not the only child who suffers from loss, are not treated differently by their peers, and have a space to be themselves.

We also host Good Grief Campouts, which combine traditional camp activities like zip lining, water activities, and s'mores with grief support and remembrance ceremonies. Additionally, our Family Camps and Campouts offer grieving caregivers and their children a chance to heal as a family. Our families leave these camps with enhanced connections between the children and surviving parents to deepen the family connection as they grow together on their grief journey.

Virtual Programming

In 2020, TAPS Youth Programs led the way in the creation and facilitation of virtual Family Support programs. The TAPS Youth Programs team welcomed over 300 surviving family members at the TAPS Good Grief and Family Summer Camp at Home. In these sessions, military families connected with Military Mentors and came together as a family to engage in meaningful activities to cope with their grief while navigating the world of a global pandemic. TAPS Youth Programs also launched a Flat Mentor campaign where Military Mentors created cut-outs of their smiling faces and stayed in contact with their mentee providing hope and joy to both the Military Mentors and grieving military children while staying safe in the comfort of their community.

YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM

STEPPING INTO ADULTHOOD

Transitioning into adulthood can be a challenge, especially while grieving the loss of an important person in your life. TAPS Young Adults program bridges the gap between our youth and adult programming serving 18 to 19-year-old surviving children and siblings. Our programs help survivors navigate their emotions, make decisions about their educational journey or career path, and build new relationships without delaying their growth in grief. This one-of-a-kind program connects military survivors with a community of peers, support navigating life transitions, and mentorship for growth in a safe and age-appropriate environment. Together, surviving military young adults work through a deliberate curriculum to develop the skills and tools necessary for a successful transition into adulthood.

In 2020, The TAPS Young Adults Program initiated a program titled *Put me in Coach: TAPS Young Adult Coaching Series*. This series will pair a TAPS young adult with a TAPS Group Leader volunteer. Together, they will navigate lessons and activities in each of the Five Growth Pillars during a 10-week series of curriculum.



COLLEGE EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS

Navigating college applications can be a challenge for high school students. Military survivors face that challenge in addition to navigating their grief journey. Since 2017, we have welcomed high school students grieving the loss of a parent whose life included military service to our annual College Experience program.

In 2020, TAPS welcomed college-bound survivors virtually where they learned about resume building, budgeting, networking, and ways to present themselves professionally. Survivors also learned about education benefits, FAFSA scholarships, and how to apply to and select a college. In 2021, TAPS anticipates connecting with 1,600 survivors to navigate their educational benefits.

YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM FIVE GROWTH PILLARS

- 1 Personal Development
- 2 Financial Stability
- 3 Communications
- 4 Career Development
- 5 Service to Others

SISTERS IN GRIEF

With the goal of moving forward with joy, gratitude, and resilience, our Women's Empowerment Program helps bereaved women to redefine identity, reclaim power, and move forward with courage, resilience, and new hope. We focus on the needs of mind, body, and spirit to help survivors clarify their direction in life and create their own paths to growth.

Our program is influenced by the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) model to increase the survivor's psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility means that a person is able to connect to the present moment fully as a conscious individual and in their current situation. Individuals with psychological flexibility recognize they have the power to change or continue their behaviors based on their own values within.

Drawing on ACT's guiding principles, the Women's Empowerment program produces measurable and replicable improvements in psychological flexibility and emotional self-regulation skills. In 2020, we responded immediately to the COVID-19 pandemic by offering virtual engagements and connections for all surviving women grieving the loss of their children, spouses, fiancées, significant others, parents, and siblings with tools to promote mindful movement and art therapy.

In 2020, TAPS Women's Empowerment launched the first and only **The Love Work Virtual Retreat** specific for military surviving women living with grief. At this retreat, women learned how to rebuild their lives after loss with love. This five-week program met once a week for 140+ surviving women to connect for group Zoom sessions, share big feelings with small groups, engage with prompts, projects and activities. These survivors received support and guidance to process emotions of love, and progress through TAPS very own **Love Work Empowerment Workbook™**.



In 2020, TAPS Women's Empowerment welcomed more first-time attendees than any other program in TAPS.



of all women who attended virtually were attending their very first Women's Empowerment event



of attending women experienced a significant increase in their ability to choose self-values over negative thoughts and behaviors

FINDING EMOTIONAL HEIGHTS

*Requiring dedication, preparation, and a real sense of adventure, our Expeditions and Outdoor Programs are extended, skills-based programs. Professional guides lead small groups of survivors through some of the world's most inspiring landscapes. In 2020, we welcomed survivors by launching a major social media campaign to get survivors outdoors with *A Breath of Fresh Air*. Through this program, we have learned that when survivors are able to engage in nature-inspired peer gatherings, they are more likely to grow in their self-confidence and improve their overall well-being by getting outdoors.*

MONTH 1 – GETTING & STAYING GROUNDED

- EPISODE 1:** Catching Your Breath
- EPISODE 2:** Listen. Learn. Love
- EPISODE 3:** Connecting to the Land
- EPISODE 4:** Home Sweet Home

MONTH 2 – CHANGING LANDSCAPES

- EPISODE 5:** Changing Landscapes
- EPISODE 6:** Honoring What Doesn't Change, Our Love
- EPISODE 7:** Moving Through Change
- EPISODE 8:** Finding Gratitude in Change

MONTH 3 – SEASONS OF GRIEF

- EPISODE 9:** Season of Darkness
- EPISODE 10:** Season of Ritual
- EPISODE 11:** Season of Peace
- EPISODE 12:** Season of Giving



HEALING IN THE OUTDOORS

TAPS Outdoor Programs create opportunities for military survivors to learn and integrate nature-based skills as part of their grief journey. TAPS Outdoors support grieving military survivors to connect with the healing power of nature in their community, in their region, within the United States, and around the world.

Our Expeditions, the cornerstone of TAPS Outdoors, are therapeutic, outdoor skills-based events in the backcountry across the globe. Led by both TAPS facilitators and professional outdoor guides, our families learn and grow together in some of the world's most challenging and inspiring landscapes. From the Andes mountains of Peru and the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro to the coastlines of the United States, we support military survivors to heal in the great outdoors.



The goal is simple: help our network of surviving military families and friends of TAPS get outdoors, breathe in the fresh air and utilize the tools we have to support their journey to healing along the way.”

— Rachel Hunsell

Program Manager for Outdoor Engagement

CREATING NEW MEMORIES

Watching a sports event or a concert with fellow survivors is more than the event, it's about making new memories with the pastimes once shared with our military loved ones. Aiming to ease survivors' transition and support their growth, our Sports & Entertainment programs create meaningful opportunities for survivors to build connections, share memories, and celebrate the life and service of our fallen.

The TAPS sports program, teams4taps, creates meaningful engagements for survivors to share stories of their loved one with athletic teams and athletes that their loved one supported and enjoyed. With events such as concerts and theater performances, Stars4TAPS creates opportunities for survivors to make new memories with musicians, Broadway productions, and TV and film actors who once brought them and their fallen loved ones joy.

2,383

military survivors connected with Sports & Entertainment for meaningful engagements honoring the life and service of their military loved one

In 2020, the Sports & Entertainment team elevated relationships and got creative to bring joy right into the safety of survivors' living rooms. By hosting Facebook Live events and zoom sessions with athletes and celebrities, survivors were able to continue creating memorable moments in honor of the life and service of their military loved one.



144
Sports & Entertainment
engagements honoring
947
military deceased

HONORING THE LIVING LEGACY OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE WITH SURVIVORS OF MILITARY LOSS AROUND THE WORLD



TAPS joins organizations around the world who are caring for families of military and conflict deceased to unite with great purpose in our heroes' selfless service. We work as a global collaboration to go beyond borders, rise above political or religious differences, transcend language barriers and unite with one voice in hope and healing.

★ *The TAPS Shared Studios Portal* is an innovative technology that connects surviving families around the world. In 2020, TAPS held 22 virtual engagements with 198 participants from 12 countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Gaza, Rwanda, Bolivia, Honduras and Mexico City.

★ *TAPS Global Youth Exchange* program used Zoom in 2020 to offer American and foreign children to share their grief and heal together. Sessions were held with grieving military children in Iraq, Afghanistan and Georgia.

★ *TAPS International received* certification through the International Stability Operations Association.

★ *TAPS Ukraine held a major* national gathering in Dnipro, with TAPS International providing training.

★ *TAPS International presented* our programs to the world once again at Geneva Peace Week, speaking on The Power of Grief and Community in Peace Building as part of the global gathering to address the Humanity of Peace and Conflict.

★ *TAPS International held the* Third Annual International Working Group for Organizations Caring for Families of Military/Conflict Deceased 8-11 December with 31 nations participating.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



A Message from the Chairman of the Board

I continue to be in awe of the resilience of the military survivors that TAPS serves. And, along with my fellow Board Members, I continue to be proud of the amazing team that supports these survivors every day.

TAPS opened its doors in 1994, with newly widowed Bonnie Carroll at its helm. Today, Bonnie continues this life-saving work with the help of staff and volunteers positioned around the country to connect with military families at their most vulnerable time.

This year has proven to be an incredibly challenging year for the world, and most specifically, military loved ones left behind to cope with their grief and trauma amidst a global pandemic.

I am proud of the way TAPS immediately transitioned its programs and services in response to COVID-19. Here is just a snapshot of the major accomplishments of 2020:

- *Increased the amount of retroactive benefits identified and secured for military families by 77% (\$3.9M total in 2020)*
- *Connected surviving military families with \$180M in education benefits*
- *Empowered 3,050 surviving women by expanding and enhancing the Women's Empowerment Program for a healthy grief journey (an increase of 1,300% from 2019)*
- *Tripled the number of TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing free webinars and workshops for all military survivors to learn and practice coping tools from leading experts in grief and bereavement*
- *Shifted local community connections to virtual connections for 4,184 military survivors (an increase of 20% from 2019)*
- *Saved lives by answering 13,000+ calls to the 24/7 live answer National Military Survivor Helpline and Survivor Care Team*

If you have not yet been able to learn more about the life-saving resources of TAPS, I personally extend the invitation to you. Stand with us and share your support for the families of our nation's fallen heroes. America needs your support.

John B. Wood,
Chairman, TAPS Board of Directors
CEO, Telos Corporation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Chairman
CEO, Telos Corporation

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WAYS TO GIVE



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Tribute Tile at National Headquarters

Sponsorship

Honor Guard Gala
Host or Support a Fundraiser

*For more on these ways to support TAPS,
visit TAPS.org/support or email us
at development@TAPS.org.*

Volunteer

As a Service Enterprise program TAPS has completed a thorough, research-based assessment of our existing volunteer engagement practices and completed training focused on change management and volunteer engagement. This designation signifies TAPS commitment to leveraging the time and talent of our volunteers to meet our organizational mission to provide comfort, care and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one, all at no cost to surviving families and loved ones.



TAPS is recognized by Points of Light as a Service Enterprise Network Partner, meaning that we strategically leverage volunteers to make a greater impact.

*For more in TAPS volunteer opportunities,
call 202.588.TAPS(8277) or
volunteer@taps.org*

join us

1,500+

volunteers donated their time
and talent in 2020 to provide

69,000+

hours worth of support

TAPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is funded by the generosity of donors who care deeply about our nation's legacy of service and sacrifice.

DONORS



JOIN OUR SPONSORS

Our team is ready to guide you through the process of creating a successful partnership.

Join us at TAPS.org/sponsorship

Contact us

202.588.TAPS (8277)
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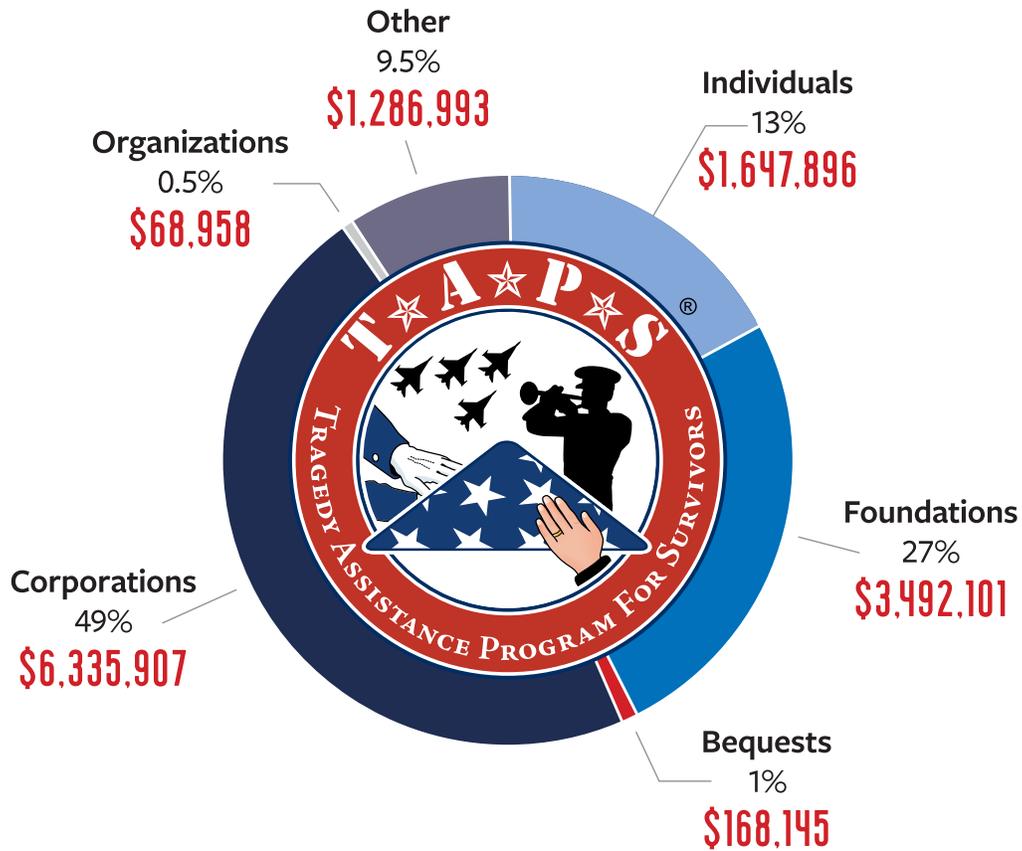
AIMCO Properties
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We were able to provide programs and services in 2020 thanks to the \$13 million in generous donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations.



2020 Funding Represented by our donors

\$0.88 OF EVERY DOLLAR PROVIDES DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO TAPS SURVIVORS.

*The financial results included in this report may contain unaudited figures. TAPS complete audited financial statements can be obtained online at TAPS.org/financials

LOVE LIVES ON ALBUM

“I’ve seen first hand the commitment that the family makes when their loved one serves our country and sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice.”

— Billy Ray Cyrus
Country Music Singer, Songwriter & Actor

THE INSPIRING STORIES BEHIND LOVE LIVES ON

“Love Lives On” is an album dedicated to the men and women who lived a life in service to America’s freedom and died.

The songs included in this powerful collection share an honest message of courage, perseverance, and love. They are a vivid reminder of the guardians of our freedom and a reminder that the family also served and now grieve. Ten stories, ten families, ten lives lived and love that lives on.



In Honor of Those Who Have Served and Died



Your generous donation of funds, time,
and talent supports the TAPS mission.

202.588.TAPS(8277) ★ TAPS.ORG ★ @TAPSORG

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