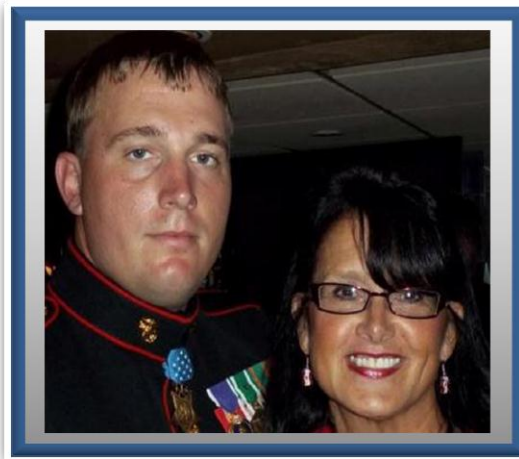




PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Of Heroes and Sheroes

Heroes come in all ages and shapes and sizes. And most of us have one (or more). He could be a coach, a youth pastor or neighbor or anyone else who has made an impact on our lives. He could also be a “she,” as in nurse or teacher or grandmother. Or she could be a Blue Star Mother.



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I recently had the privilege of spending time with two different

Medal of Honor recipients, Paul Bucha and Dakota Meyer. Both are considered “heroes” for their respective roles in combat and how they served our country. And many of us can identify “heroes” in our own families, as our sons and daughters are returning from combat with their own stories of courage under fire. On more than one occasion I have heard from someone in one of my sons’ command, who said, “Mrs. Barnes, if it weren’t for your son(s), I wouldn’t be here today.”

But I want to tell you a story about a couple of “sheroes.” They are Blue Star Mothers who heard about a serious situation, and they stepped up with courage to fill the role necessary to bring a Serviceman home to the funeral of his wife and daughter. The first shero was from Oklahoma.

After hearing about the tragic death of a soldier’s wife and daughter, our Oklahoma BSM made contact with the Serviceman’s commander to arrange for someone to be at the airport when the soldier returned from Iraq. She was informed that he was first landing at an airbase in North Carolina, so she called on a Blue Star Mother there to make sure he would have the personal touch of a “mother” upon his arrival.

The NC Mother located a closer Blue Star Mother, who was told about the tragedy in OK and the Serviceman’s situation. She agreed to be at the airport when he returned, and she brought another BSM with her. The original plan called for the Chaplain Services to greet the Soldier, but no Chaplain arrived. Instead, two Blue Star Mothers met the grief-stricken man and they personally transported him that night to the next destination from which he was supposed to leave. He arrived later in Oklahoma and attended the funeral of his wife and daughter, who had been killed in a car accident. He declined the offer of the OK BSMs to attend the private funeral, but he expressed his gratitude that they had assisted him in his journey of grief.

I, too, want to thank all of these Blue Star Mothers who stepped up and served this Soldier in his hour of profound loss and deep grief. Ladies, you are my Sheroes, as is every other Blue Star Mother who carries on our mission “to support our troops, our veterans, and the families of our fallen heroes.” God bless you all.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTIONS

DEPARTMENT OF OKLAHOMA 7th Annual Convention ~ September 30 to October 2, 2011



This year's convention was held in Stillwater, OK. There were 58 in attendance over the 3-day event with 32 voting delegates. 15 Oklahoma chapters were represented with chapters visiting from Texas 6 & 11 and Kansas 2 & 4; we hope they were able to take a few good ideas back with them to their chapters.

Attendees stayed at the Quality Inn with business and elections held at the Stillwater Community Center.

Lunch was provided by the Department of Oklahoma. We had a wonderful variety of sandwiches and excellent desserts that ranged from cookies to dessert bars. On Sunday the Department provided a meat and cheese tray along with a wonderful fruit tray.

We were honored to have in attendance the National President, Robin McCarthy, and her husband, Mike. It was a pleasure having Robin join us and to perform the installation of our new Department officers.

“Election Day” speakers were Edwina Luker from the VA who spoke on OEF/OIF Programs, Matt Stiner with “Justice For All Vets”, and Major General Rita Aragon, Oklahoma Secretary of Military and Veterans. They all had great things to share about the programs they are with.

We are looking forward to another fine year here in Oklahoma and hope that we will be able to double the number in attendance for next year.



Edwina Luker

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Program Manager for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND)

This program is here to assist the men and women of OEF, OIF, and OND in making a Seamless Transition from active duty to civilian life. Eligible for these programs are

Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Gulf War or in combat against hostile force during periods of hostility after November 11, 1998, and has an honorable discharge. www.oklahoma.va.gov



Matt Stiner

Veteran Marine joins “Justice For Vets” as the New Director of Development and Outreach.

“Veterans Treatment Courts are growing faster than any other Treatment Court model in the United States” said NAFCP CEO West Huddleston. “Fortunately, Matt Stiner has the energy, experience, and expertise to keep up with this rapidly expanding field.

If you know of a Vet that is having problems coping with the after effects of these wars and have found them in front of a Judge. There is now a possible treatment versus jail. Matt was a guest speaker at the Dept. Convention, sharing what is happening around Oklahoma in “Vet Courts” “It’s The Right Thing To Do” www.justiceforvets.org

Rita Aragon

Major General (Ret) Aragon is a wonderful lady that did not let life stand in her way and she does not let life stand in the way of her support of the Veterans and their families. She is blessing to all. She has started a new program called Veteranscentral.com A new social network about military only. This will be launched in Oklahoma on Veterans Day. After 60 days, it is scheduled to be launched in CA, then nationwide by March. This will cost taxpayers nothing. Chesapeake Energy is providing the start-up money for this project. She also spoke about the increased suicide rate doubling each year.

Rita Aragon, Major General (Ret) Oklahoma Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Rita Aragon is a retired United States Air National Guard major general who is currently serving as the 4th Oklahoma Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Her final active military post was as the Air National Guard assistant to the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff Manpower and Personnel. She retired in 2006.

General Aragon is the first woman to hold the position of VA Secretary. As Secretary, she serves as Governor Fallin's chief advisor on matters related to the policies and operations of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs.

She enlisted in the Oklahoma Air National Guard on September 9, 1979 as an Airman Basic. She received her commission through the Academy of Military Science at Knoxville, Tennessee, in October 1981. In February 1989, then Captain Aragon became the first female commander in the history of the Oklahoma Air National Guard when she assumed command of the 137th Air Refueling Wing. She became the first female to hold the rank of Brigadier General in the history of the United States Air National Guard as the commander and Assistant Adjutant General for the Oklahoma Air National Guard in March 2003.

While serving as Assistant Adjutant General, General Aragon was appointed to serve as the Air National Guard assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management and Comptroller. She served in that position from 2003 to 2005. In 2006, General Aragon was appointed Air National Guard assistant to the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff Manpower and Personnel. In that position, General Aragon oversaw policies and plans covering all part of the Air Force's military and civilian personnel management.

A recipient of many awards and recognitions, she was inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame in 2009.

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER ARTICLES AND PICTURES

Submit all newsletter articles and pictures to the Second Vice President at secondvp@bluestarmothers.org by the 15th of the month to be included in the following month's Newsletter.

Along with our monthly newsletter, many of our activities and events can be found on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bluestarmothers) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/bluestarmothers). Photos of many chapter events and most national events are linked or posted on these sites.

Chapters with links to online news stories can post these on the National Facebook or Twitter page

DEPARTMENT OF OHIO **September 30 to October 2, 2011**

2011-2012 Department of Ohio Officers

President - Pat Pell
1st VP – Kris Dervin
2nd VP – Pam Mutchler
RS - Barb Funk
FS - Brenda Russell
Treasurer – Marjorie Pizzino



2011-2012 Department of Ohio Big Dipper Officers

President – Anita Wagner
VP – Marjorie Bryan
RS – Paula Lombardo
FS – Kris Dervin
Treasurer – Jill Gibbs

Our convention was held at the Hilton Hotel, which was located near the Columbus, Ohio airport. This location, which is centrally located within the state, was chosen in order to encourage as many chapter members to participate. 12 of the possible 15 chapters had a representative and there were 50 registered attendees. The accommodations and food were excellent, and it is our hope to hold our future 2012 North/South Conference and 2012 Department Convention again at this facility, as we received many positive comments from the attendees. The theme for the convention was “we are bridges”, which meant that the Blue Star Mothers are bridges to our families and all our military personnel.

We had reports from all our committees, including an audit of the Department of Ohio financial books. The audit indicated that the books were in order and there were no discrepancies noted. Pat Pell gave Robin McCarthy’s apology for being unable to attend due to her attendance at the Department of Oklahoma Convention. We went over the changes to our governing documents, which were approved at the National Convention, and the revised documents were distributed to all the attendees. Updates were given by Pat Pell concerning the election of new National Officers, National Big Dipper, the bill before Congress to expand BSMA membership criteria, associates on the website issues, providing 60 day transitioning/mentoring for new officers within the chapters, insight on current issues facing chapters and tips on how to conduct chapter meetings. Discussions concerning chapter compliance, chapter rosters and dues, and website education were given by the financial officers. Throughout the convention, chapter reports were given and also VA/VS reports.

Our guest speaker was Ohio Adjutant General, Major General Deborah A. Ashenhurst. Major General Ashenhurst holds the distinction of being the Ohio National Guard’s first female Adjutant General. As a member of the Governor’s cabinet, she commands the Ohio National Guard, consisting of the Ohio Army National Guard, the Ohio Air National Guard, the Ohio Military Reserve and the Ohio Naval Militia, totaling over 17,000 personnel.

Big Dipper fun night, on Saturday, involved the Mardi Gras theme and was well attended. Masks, beads and “crazy” sunglasses were distributed to everyone. It was a very successful night, as \$915 was raised from the silent auction items. The games/ events of the night involved almost all of the participants and it was good to see so many mothers laughing and enjoying themselves.

Interesting facts:

Virginia Clark was our oldest member in attendance. She will be 90 on March 9, 2012. She joined Blue Star Mothers in 1965 and VAVS in 1985. Chapter 41 was chartered August 12, 1943. Joyce Sanford, Chapter President, was present at the convention. Chapter 57-Geneva was chartered November 9, 1943. They had seven members and one associate present at the convention. Our youngest member present was Diane Spires, age 44, from Chapter 22.

On Sunday, a Memorial Service was held for the fallen soldiers and deceased Blue Star Mothers (Deborah Wick, Eva Morrison and Mary (Susie) Huffer). Installation of Department Officers and Big Dipper was held. Jane Tapassi and Virginia Clark assisted with the installation.

DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA

October 15, 2011



The Department of Minnesota's 2011 Convention was hosted by our South Metro Chapter and held at the Hopkins (MN) VFW. The DEB provided morning snacks for the membership, and the Hopkins VFW made home-made meatless lasagna, a salad bar and breadsticks.

Our Opening Ceremony included Presentation of Colors by our MN NG, followed by a Flag Folding Ceremony and presentation of the U.S. Flag to our Department.

Following the reading of the Convention Rules, the Minutes from our Spring Meeting were read and adopted. Committee Reports were presented which included reports from our Department 1st, 2nd and 3rd VPs, and our FS/Treasurer. We also heard reports from our VAVS and our Finance Committee reporting our books had been audited and in order. This was followed by our Minnesota Chapters presenting their Chapter Reports.

Our National President Robin McCarthy was attending another Department Convention and unable to be present.

Our Guest Speaker was MN NG LTC Christine Ostendorf, daughter of our MN BSM Sue Stowe. LTC Ostendorf gave a slide presentation of and spoke to us about her most recent deployment, highlighting the effects deployments have on family members.

Our 3rd VP honored our Minnesota Fallen and presented our POW/MIA Ceremony, at which time we recessed for lunch.

At a point during our meeting, DP Pattie Kelley referred to our Department elections and explained while there were Member's present qualified to accept a nomination as Department President, at this point in time none were able to accept a nomination; however, she also stated there are others who are qualified, but were unable to attend today's Convention. Because of these unusual circumstances, the Department of Minnesota did not hold their elections. At this time, Pattie Kelley remains Department President, PDP Dottie Sills 1st VP Pro Tem, Sue Stowe 2nd VP, Denise Guerra 3rd VP, Brenda Kroulik Recording Secretary, Sally Hammes Financial Secretary, and Pam Pettit Treasurer.

DP Kelley presented Remarks for the Good of the Order, we held our Raffle, and our Department Convention was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Pattie Kelley, President – Department of Minnesota

Additional Comments: In keeping with our Governing Documents, the Department of Minnesota is holding another State-wide Convention for the purpose of DEB Elections only. This will take place on Saturday, November 19, 2011 and is being hosted by our Buffalo (MN) Chapter. We are honored that our NP Robin McCarthy will be our Guest for the day. Thank you.

DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN
69th Convention ~ October 14-16, 2011 ~ Kalamazoo, MI

2011/2012 Officers

Pres. Kristine Wirgau
1VP Lisa Gwilt
2VP Deb Cadle
3VP Sharon Crammer
RS Diane Holman
FS Sandra Guy
Treasurer Barb Butler



See The MI Special

CHEER

On The Next Page!

There were 26 voting delegates and many non-voting members to participate in the learning, comradery and fun. Friday night was Big Dipper Fun Night/Tailgate Party with the theme of Team Spirit. The meal was delicious, the games we played fun and over \$600 dollars was raised by the silent auction to add to the Educational Assistance Fund. Seven awards were announced by the Educational Assistance Committee.

Saturday we had a Memorial Service to honor Michigan's fallen heroes of this past year. The practice for the Service was coached by National President Robin McCarthy who was a special guest at convention. The service itself went smoothly. Our Luncheon Guest Speaker that day was Tracy Spader, a relatively new Blue Star Mother member who volunteers with Support Military Working Dogs. Tracy shared that most Military Working Dogs (MWD) are deployed for 6 to 9 months and that during that time they are responsible for saving 1,082 lives, 150 of those are military. We learned that there are currently about 500 dogs deployed and the U.S. military provides only a leash, a collar and their food. Support military working dogs provides much more. This topic deserves more coverage so watch for an article on MWD.

Committee reports were shared and over the course of the weekend each chapter shared about their activities, both to raise funds and support our military and veterans. These activities are as diverse as Wreaths Across America, a Street Fair, a Blanket drive, and helping with the Marine's Toys for Tots campaign. One chapter told how they made Sandwich Boards with their military child's picture on them to wear in a parade, and used them again by posting them near where they conducted a car wash fund raiser. Seeing who these ladies were, many of their car wash customers were getting out and helping them wash! We celebrated the success of Joyce Fabian from MI 180 who has worked so hard over the past two years and succeeded this past spring in getting a Gold Star Plates bill past for the Gold Star Families in the State of Michigan! We also learned that the Sept/Oct edition of Michigan History magazine has an article about the beginnings of Blue Star Mother of America's written by MI 180's Barb Platz.

Our National President Robin McCarthy she gave us a sneak peak at the plans for the 2012 National Convention, encouraging us all to come.

Saturday night's banquet was great and our Guest Speakers for the evening were three Voluntary Service Directors at three of the Michigan's VA centers. Beverly Leneksi of the Ann Arbor VA spoke about the Annual Joint Review that each organization must go through and on recruitment not just from your chapter, but any contact that is willing to volunteer on your Blue Star Mother chapter's behalf and where to find them. Nancy Babcock of the Battle Creek VA spoke about the unlimited opportunities to volunteer and remind each chapter to thank/recognize the efforts of each of their volunteers! Denise Deitzen of the Saginaw VA covered the Veteran Caregiver Support System and told us about the no veteran dies alone program.

Sunday we reviewed compliance documents, conducted Department business, made a few tentative plans for the coming months and elected new Department Officers.

A special thanks to departing President Carol Gates and her board for guiding our Department so well this past year, for a great convention and to the Clarion Staff for taking such good care of us!



Here is the cheer that the MI ladies at table 2 came up with at the Big Dipper Fun Night

Blue Star Mothers are like no others
 We stick together like bread and butter.
 We stick together for our sons and daughters.
 Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines.
 We pack those boxes like mean machines.
GO BLUE STAR MOTHERS!

Remember.....

www.ServiceFlags.com 1-866-887-6678

For all your patriotic purchases.

When ordering, use your discount code: BSM

NOVEMBER DATES OF REMEMBRANCE, CELEBRATION, OR OBSERVANCE

- November 2, 1783 ~ US General George Washington gives his 'Farewell Address to the Army' In Rocky Hill, New Jersey (this was the farewell order to the Continental Army)
- November 5, 2009 ~ 13 people are killed and 30 injured by a lone gunman at Fort Hood US Army Base, TX
- **November 4-6, 2011 ~ Navy Sabbath**
- **November 4-6, 2011 ~ Armed Forces Sabbath**
- November 10, 1954 ~ Iwo Jima Memorial dedicated in Washington, DC, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on the 179th birthday of the US Marine Corps
- November 10, 1982 ~ Vietnam Veterans Memorial opens to visitors in Washington, D.C.
- November 10, 2004 ~ Vietnam Memorial Plaque dedicated to honor veterans who died after the war as a direct result of injuries suffered in Vietnam, but who fall outside DOD guidelines
- **November 10, 2011 ~ Birthday of the United States Marine Corps**
- **November 11, 2011 ~ Veterans Day**
- November 11, 1918 ~ Armistice Day; WW I officially ends with the signing of the armistice agreement
- November 11, 1921 ~ Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery is dedicated by President Warren G. Harding
- November 11, 1984 ~ Vietnam 'The Three Soldiers' statue dedicated in Washington, D.C.
- November 11, 1993 ~ Vietnam Women's Memorial dedicated in Washington, D.C.
- November 13, 1982 ~ Vietnam Granite Wall dedicated in Washington, D.C.
- **November 24, 2011 ~ Thanksgiving Day**



Remembering Our Nations Fallen Heroes October 2011

Spc. James A. Butz, 21, Porter, IN
PO 1st Class (SEAL) Caleb A. Nelson, 26, Omaha, NE
1st Sgt. Billy J. Siercks, 32, Velda Village, MO
Pvt. Danny Chen, 19, New York, NY
Lance Cpl. Benjamin W. Schmidt, 24, San Antonio, TX
Spc. Ricardo Cerros Jr., 24, Salinas, CA
Capt. Joshua S. Lawrence, 29, Nashville, TN
Capt. Drew E. Russell, 25, Scotts, MI
CWO James B. Wilke, 38, Ione, CA
Staff Sgt. Nathan L. Wyrick, 34, Enumclaw, WA
CPO (SEAL) Michael R. Tatham, 33, University Place, WA
Lance Cpl. Scott D. Harper, 21, Winston, GA
Staff Sgt. Robert B. Cowdrey, 39, Atwater, OH
Spc. Jeremiah T. Sancho, 23, Palm Bay, FL
Staff Sgt. Houston M. Taylor, 25, Hurst, TX
Spc. Michael D. Elm, 25, Phoenix, AZ

Staff Sgt. James R. Leep Jr., 44, Richmond, VA
Staff Sgt. Jorge M. Oliveira, 33, Newark, NJ
CPO Raymond J. Border, 31, West Lafayette, OH
1st. Lt. Ashley I. White, 24, Alliance, OH
Sgt. 1st Class Kristoffer B. Domeij, 29, San Diego, CA
Pfc. Christopher A. Horns, 20, Colorado Springs, CO
Sgt. Paul A. Rivera, 26, Round Rock, TX
Lance Cpl. Jordan S. Basteau, 19, Pekin, IL
A1C Jerome D. Miller Jr., 23, Washington, DC
Pfc. Steven F. Shapiro, 29, Hidden Valley Lake, CA
Lance Cpl. Jason N. Barfield, 22, Ashford, AL
Capt. Shawn P. T. Charles, 40, Hickory, NC
Sgt. Edward S. Grace, 39, South Dartmouth, MA
Sgt. 1st Class David G. Robinson, 28, Winthrop Harbor, IL
Sgt. John A. Lyons, 26, Seaside Park, NJ
Staff Sgt. Stephen J. Dunning, 31, Milpitas, CA



**My heart said 'no' -- You cannot go -- Don't be far from me
Yet you made ready -- And kept your mind steady -- Knowing that which must be
Your strength of steel -- How can this be real -- You are a Hero through and through
There was a depth to your soul -- That set your goals -- And lead you to what you must do**

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE LOVED