



DEFENSE COMMUNITY
CHAMPIONS





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They are the people who our military families call when they're in need. They are the people that take care of service members like they're family. They are the people who understand the importance of their local installations and work to ensure their resilience.

They are **Defense Community Champions**—and their actions make a difference in the lives of our military, military families, and veterans. Join ADC in recognizing the individuals who make a difference in our communities through deeds big and small. They are leaders on base, in the community, and across the federal government and industry. Defense Community Champions inspire us to support the men and women who protect our nation every day.

What is the Defense Community Champion Program?

For decades, ADC's annual awards program, the Defense Community Awards, recognized specific leaders from around the country for their contributions to defense communities and the military. While acknowledging the role that leaders play is important—ADC's Champions program expands the focus of this recognition to a broader set of people and stories in our defense communities. Through a competitive nomination process, ADC will select a diverse group of champions that will be honored at a special Washington, D.C. event and various media channels. Their stories will serve as inspiration and ideas for the military support community.



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Who Can Be Nominated as a Champion?

Individuals who make a difference in the lives of our military and military families. ADC will consider the following criteria in reviewing nominations:

Connection

They are connected to a defense community in some way and an ADC member is submitting the nomination.

Impact

Their work has had an impact on the lives of service members and their families and/or the quality of life in a defense community.

Awareness

The individual's story embodies a lesson, concept or idea that could be universally beneficial to defense communities.

Diversity

The individual represents the range of people, experiences, and background whose support is critical to creating great communities for our service members and families

How do you Nominate a Champion and who Selects them?

Fill out the nomination form [here](#) and make sure you include an ADC member as part of the submission. The initial nomination form is short (four questions), but ADC may request additional details as part of its consideration. The 2022 Champions will be selected through member-driven process that will include an advisory committee, board, and staff input.

What is the Timeline?

The nomination period is now open and will close on **December 31**.
Champions will be selected no later than **January 30, 2022**.



How Will Champions be Recognized?

The champions selected for the national program will be featured in broad campaign, including:

- ★ **Special recognition ceremony at ADC's Defense Communities National Summit in March 2022.**
- ★ **Profiles in ADC's publications**, including the Summit program and annual magazine.
- ★ **Video stories** that will be shared through social media outlets and used at the Summit.
- ★ **Opportunities for local recognition** where champions will be thanked by local community and military leaders.
- ★ **Profiles in ADC's daily newsletter** distributed to thousands across the country and through DoD.



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Who Should we Nominate as a Defense Community Champion?

ADC has been telling the story of community champions for years through its America's Defense Communities Magazine and while they are not officially part of this program, their stories provide a great example of the people and stories ADC is interested in highlighting as part of this new program.



Home Away From Home

Phyllis Fitzgerald joined the armed services over 40 years ago, yet she still remembers the feeling of being alone at her first duty station. As mayor of Junction City, Kan., she decided she had to do more make young soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Riley feel more welcomed. Thus, she created an “adopt-a-soldier” program where service members are matched up with local families, creating tight bonds and support systems between both the base and the community.



Angel Arms

Esther Steinle, a Clovis, N.M. resident, was inspired by a book she once read to cover the cost of a trip back home for a service member who hadn't been with his family for the holidays in years. After that, she expanded her idea into a program, Angel Arms, and began working in conjunction with nearby Cannon AFB to raise funds to send more service members home. Thanks to Esther's initiative, the program has since raised thousands of dollars and sent dozens to be with their families to enjoy the holidays.



A Soldier Saves her Local Farmers Market

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down a beloved community farmers market in Hinesville, Ga., Rebecca Myers, a garrison command sergeant major at nearby Fort Stewart, decided to act and safely continue the tradition. She helped create a system where locals could pick up pre-ordered boxes of local produce in a contactless drive-through, coordinating with local businesses and recruiting volunteers from her base to staff the program.



Base Commanders Making a Difference

Many topics can create friction between communities and bases. Yet when ADC spoke to base commanders across the country, they highlighted relationships that are not only productive, but also warm and welcoming. For example, Col. John Schutte, Commander of the 19th Airlift Wing at Little Rock AFB, says that “from almost day one I was welcomed as if I was family... the community support allows us to focus on what is important as defenders.”