

We are **One Community.**



INSTALLATION INNOVATION FORUM

MILITARY SPOUSE COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

20 PILOT AFTER
23 ACTION REPORT

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Military Spouse Community Leadership Initiative was designed to bring military spouses from across the country together with their respective installation and community leaders to attend the Installation Innovation Forum (IIF), an annual event held by the Association of Defense Communities (ADC). IIF is a cross-service event, gathering installation, community and industry leaders to share on-the-ground best practices, innovations and partnership efforts.

Developed in partnership with senior military spouses from the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps, the Military Spouse Leadership Initiative was designed to give spouses a voice in the conversations that take place at IIF. Nine military spouses attended IIF as part of the initiative, three each from the Army, Air/Space Force and Marine Corps. Spouses shared insights on quality-of-life challenges, learned about defense policies and local economic development efforts, met with installation leaders and more.

This initiative is the first step in a broader ADC effort to identify ways to integrate military spouses into the defense community leadership framework that is at the center of solving a broad set of challenges today and in the future.



“ Quality-of-life issues like military child education, spousal employment, housing and childcare have rightfully taken the spotlight at ADC in recent years. New stakeholders have joined these critical conversations; however, one significant voice is often missing at the table, the voice that’s on the front-line managing impacts of quality-of-life. That is our military spouses. Recognizing this gap, ADC, in partnership

with senior military spouses and the service partnership divisions and leads, designed a groundbreaking initiative. They brought a group of military spouses from across the country to the Installation Innovation Forum to engage with their installation and community leaders. I’m thrilled that they are here, and I commend ADC for taking this critical step. ”

– **Sharene Brown, spouse of the 21st
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs**

MILITARY SPOUSES

ARMY

VANESSA ERRICO

Current Duty Station: Austin, TX

MAGGIE MALDONADO

Current Duty Station: Schofield Barracks, HI

LAURA MYER

Current Duty Station: Fort Drum, NY

AIR FORCE

JANET DRIGGERS

Current Duty Station: Joint Base San Antonio, TX

LAUREN KIMBALL

Current Duty Station: Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD

MARIA QUINN

Current Duty Station: The Pentagon

MARINE CORPS

TORRY BEAVEN

Current Duty Station: Marine Corps Base Hawaii

ANDRA REVENTLOW

Current Duty Station: Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, GA

RENEE WOODWORTH

Current Duty Station: Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA



INVOLVEMENT AT INSTALLATION INNOVATION FORUM

While attending IIF, military spouses were able to share their knowledge, learn best practices about on-the-ground military-community partnerships and network with a wide variety of stakeholders. During the event, spouses had a combination of scheduled meetings and time to “choose their own adventure” – attending whichever breakout sessions appealed to them most.

PRE-FORUM COORDINATION

In the months leading up to IIF, ADC coordinated introductions between each military spouse and their respective local community and installation leaders, encouraging them to engage prior to and during IIF. ADC also conducted a series of webinars to help prepare the participants, defining terms, programs and organizations they were likely to encounter at the event.

SPECIAL MEETINGS WITH KEY LEADERS

Spouses had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with their respective services’ senior installation management commanders, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installations Energy and Environment, the Director of the office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC), the ADC Board of Directors and key defense community, installation, and industry stakeholders.



INTEGRATION INTO THE FORUM

The initiative and the participating spouses were introduced during a general session on the first day of the conference. ADC wanted to ensure spouses felt included, welcomed, and championed throughout the event. Two spouses, Renee Woodworth and Janet Driggers participated in a general session moderated by Meredith Lozar, Manager, Strategy & Analytics, Deloitte. They were able to share their experiences and perspectives on a wide variety of quality-of-life topics.



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

With over 70 breakout sessions, spouses had the opportunity to attend dozens of discussions focused on a wide variety of topics, including several focused on key quality-of-life issues such as childcare, housing, spouse employment, military child education and domestic violence. Specific quality of life focused sessions included:

- Solving the Off-Base Housing Crunch: New Initiatives at Cannon AFB, NM, Fort Cavazos, TX and Navy Region Mid-Atlantic
- Tackling the Military Childcare Challenge: Innovative Efforts from Across the Country
- The El Paso Approach: Providing Community Resourced Mental Healthcare to Military Families
- Omaha and Offutt AFB, NE: The Air Force's Best-Kept Secret for Military Families
- State Military Spouse Liaisons: New Roles, New Leaders in Virginia, Washington, and Alabama
- Military Esports: How Gaming Is Changing Recruitment, Morale, and Community Engagement
- Improving Military Child Education Opportunities: What's Working at the Local Level at Fort Meade, MD and Whiteman AFB, MO
- Fostering Family Readiness: The Children's Museum at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA
- Five & Thrive: Enhancing Military Family Quality of Life by Building Community Support at McDill AFB, FL
- The Maxwell AFB–River Region Partnership for Educational Excellence
- State Strategies for Enhancing Military Family Quality of Life
- Building Better Communities with Data-Driven Solutions

FEEDBACK AND TESTIMONIALS

“ The military spouses are amazing, so knowledgeable, so passionate about solutions, and so hard-working. Here we are at the hotel restaurant for dinner, laying out the problem set followed by solutions to childcare across the department of defense... several of the military spouses met as a brain trust for solutions on childcare. Talk about change agents! ”

– **Dr. Will Rowe**



Dr. Will Rowe meets with military spouses at IIF

“ The feedback from our Marine Corps spouses was overwhelmingly positive. Continuing to have their voice included in these events is critical to meeting the retention needs of our force and building shared understanding in our communities. ”

– **Maj Gen David Maxwell, Commanding General, Marine Corps Installations Command**

“ The installation Innovation Forum has provided great opportunities for me to mentor with community partners... having the opportunity to talk with them and just sit down and have coffee and tell them about some of the experiences we have as military spouses and as military families and to explain what quality of life looks like to us, helps us tell our story so that they can support us in their local community. ”

– **Renee Woodworth, Initiative Participant (Marine Corps)**

“ The value of having military spouses at the 2023 ADC IIF was immeasurable. This is a significant and impactful investment in our Army Families. ”

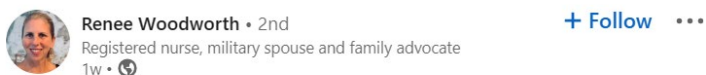
– **LTG Omar J. Jones, IV, Commanding General, U.S. Army Installation Management Command**

“ Our military spouses are critical partners in informing how we conduct and improve our quality-of-life programs to take the best care of our families. Their attendance at IIF gave them the invaluable opportunity to participate in conversations that will help shape the support programs on our installations and in collaboration with our community and industry partners. ”

– **Maj Gen. John J. Allen, Jr., Commander, Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center**

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

ADC saw mentions of the Military Spouse Community Leadership Initiative on social media throughout and following the conference.



Renee Woodworth • 2nd
Registered nurse, military spouse and family advocate
1w • Edited •

+ Follow

Thank you [Association of Defense Communities \(ADC\)](#) and MCICOM for this opportunity to innovate and create new partnerships for military spouses, families and installations. It was an honor to represent our Marine Corps spouses!



Marine Corps Installations Command

102 followers
1w • Edited •

+ Follow

The Marine Corps first recruits prospective Marines, but retention is heavily reliant on the Marine's family.

Our commitment to our Marine Corps families is a crucial element for the wellbeing of our force and is made through valuable partnerships with our defense communities.

This morning Maj. Gen. David W. Maxwell and Sgt. Maj. Jason Hammock spent time with a few remarkable Marine Corps spouses and community leaders to learn more about their experience.

This group of women is determined to make the system work better for military families. Together, they're forging innovative solutions to overcome common obstacles and amplify their voices for meaningful quality of life initiatives with the military family at the center.

[#MarineCorpsFamilies](#) [#SupportOurTroops](#) [#StrongerTogether](#) [#IIF2023](#) [#QualityofLife](#) [#ADC](#)



with Renee Woodworth and 3 others



Kayla LaFond (She/Her) • 2nd
Virginia Military Spouse Liaison
1w • Edited •

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These past three days at the [Association of Defense Communities \(ADC\)](#) Installation Innovation Forum have been fun AND informative. It was so great to see a Military Spouse panel on the main stage featuring [Renee Woodworth, RN, BSN, NCSN](#) and [Janet Driggers](#) sharing their journeys as military spouses and video remarks from [Sharene Brown](#) about [Five & Thrive](#). It's time for military spouses to be in the forefront by having a seat at the table to make positive impacts for our military communities.

Thank you [Matt Borron](#) for allowing us Liaisons, [Olivia Burley](#), [Jennifer Holliday](#) and myself, a platform to share our positions, accomplishments, and items to consider when creating a similar position in other states. We look forward to helping however we can make the position fit for YOUR state and hope to see more of these positions come to fruition soon!

To all the connections, reconnections, and collaborations created during this conference, I can't wait to see how we can continue to work together to better our military families, support mission readiness, and make positive impacts within our states and communities.

Big thanks to these other milspouse powerhouses (and I know I'm missing so many more): [Katie Lopez](#), [Meredith S.](#), [Maria Tobin](#), [Maria Quinn](#), [Lisa Slaba](#), [PMP](#), [Lisa Howard](#), [MSW](#)



Angela Ritz • 2nd
Director, Civilian Aides to the Secretary of the Army (CASA) Program at US ...
1w • Edited •

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It was great to meet these three amazing women at [Association of Defense Communities \(ADC\)](#) [#IIF2023](#) this week! The spouses and other family members that support our Soldiers help ensure the success of our [US Army](#)!



U.S. Army Installation Management Command

4,711 followers
1w • Edited •

Thanks to Army Spouses [Maggie Maldonado](#), [Laura Myer](#), and [Vanessa Errico](#) for sharing their insights with IMCOM SGM [Richard Russell](#) and LTG [Omar Jones](#) at the Association of Defense Communities Installation Innovation X. They talked about key issues including spousal employment, childcare, the PCS process, education and more.

We Are the [#ArmysHome](#) [#PeopleFirst](#)



SUCCESSSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

This year was a pilot of the Military Spouse Community Leadership Initiative. Overall, the initiative was a great success and there was strong support from all stakeholders for continuing this effort in the future. Through discussions with participating spouses, community leaders, and senior OSD and military leaders, we have identified key successes, opportunities for increasing engagement and future considerations.

KEY SUCCESSSES

- Spouses felt welcomed and integrated into the event by ADC and other attendees. Introducing and integrating the initiative during the military services' respective town halls and in a general session on the first day of the forum helped accomplish this.
- Sessions, key leader meetings and networking opportunities were valuable and informative for spouses. The ability to learn collaboratively across services and installations was appreciated.
- Spouses left the event with ideas and solutions to bring back to their community.

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

- Provide spouses with more background information and context on ADC, military services' installation programs, quality-of-life data and statistics and more preparation for meetings with senior leaders and other stakeholders as they prepare to attend IIF.
- The volume of information can be overwhelming at times. Setting aside time during the forum for spouses to regroup and debrief together would be beneficial.
- Create more opportunities for spouses to participate as speakers in breakout sessions, Q&As, roundtable discussions, etc. to share their experience and perspectives.
- Special spouse meetings often felt more like presentations than discussions. In the future, we need to ensure that these meetings provide an opportunity for the spouses to share their perspectives.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- **Spouse Cohort Model:** Create a spouse cohort model for ADC to utilize going forward. Invite and assign first spouse cohort members as mentors to assist other spouse attendees at the next conference.
- **Expand Spouse Participation:** Include spouses from enlisted ranks to diversify experiences and perspectives represented.
- **Senior Spouse Presence:** Have one senior spouse from each service in attendance to represent and guide the spouse cohort to emphasize the legitimacy and purpose of spouse participation.

LOOKING FORWARD

With the initial program pilot at IIF widely considered a success, ADC is ready to advance a plan that will continue the momentum of the initiative into 2024 and build the framework for expanding the program into the future. Outlined below are our proposed next steps:

1. Host regular virtual engagements with the cohort to share ideas, plan future engagements and support the strategic development of the initiative.
2. Integrate the cohort into ADC's Defense Communities National Summit in April 2024:
 - a. Work with the cohort to develop pre-event plans and strategies for the National Summit with a specific focus on how to plan and execute engagement and advocacy strategies.
 - b. Support travel and related costs for the cohort to travel to the DC area for the 3-day event.
 - c. Create a unique program of special engagements, learning opportunities and networking.
 - d. Host a forum/session at the National Summit to engage community and military leaders on the initiative and emerging roles for spouse leaders.
 - e. Participate in outreach events at the National Summit and on Capitol Hill to share initiative policy ideas and engage senior leaders.
 - f. Lead briefing to ADC leadership on ideas for the future of the initiative.
3. Develop year two of the initiative, which will run from June 2024 – April 2025. Timeline and components would include:
 - a. **June – August 2024:** Identify 3-4 military spouses from each service to participate in the program. ADC community members, in partnership with the military services, would be responsible for nominating participants.
 - b. **August – October 2024:** Initial engagement and learning. Prepare participants for the Installation Innovation Forum in San Antonio.
 - c. **November 2024:** Participate in Installation Innovation Forum and develop a post-event report.
 - d. **December 2024 – May 2025:** Continue engagement and begin preparation for the National Summit.
 - e. **April 2025:** Participate in the 2025 Defense Communities National Summit.
4. Develop military spouse mentorship program.
 - a. Past program participants would become mentors for future cohorts and participate in breakout panels at ADC events, helping to ensure continuity of the program.
5. Integrate military spouses into the local installation-community leadership frameworks and organizations.
 - a. Develop best practices for communities and installations that integrate military spouses into local leadership councils, military affairs committees, and other military support efforts.
 - b. Integrate ideas into ADC's overall community leadership development plans.
 - c. Identify opportunities to expand and support the program.



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