



20/15 MFRI YEAR IN REVIEW

CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTER FOR FAMILIES
& THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILITARY FAMILY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University (MFRI) works to generate new knowledge, engage with professionals who can apply it and make a positive impact on the lives of service members, veterans and their families. Situated within Purdue’s College of Health and Human Sciences in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, our mission is **research with impact**. We aim to use research to help organizations deliver effective outreach and programming. We have earned a national reputation as a collaborator whom brings organizations together to build smart programs on behalf of families who serve.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The circumstances surrounding military and veteran families are becoming more complex. They must function within a complicated array of systems — including the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the communities where they live. These systems all coexist but do not always coordinate or connect well. Budget decreases are causing substantial and abrupt changes to many programs, while the growth in service members’ compensation is slowing. Most of the care that service members, veterans and their families receive comes from community-based providers, so these connections and their communities are more important than ever.

With this in mind, MFRI engages in diverse efforts on multiple fronts. In this 2015 executive summary, we detail our collaborations at the national, regional and local levels. We demonstrate how we work every day to design, develop and deliver evidence-based strategies in collaboration with our strategic partners. And we outline how, by building smart collaborations using evidence-informed practices, we honor our missions of delivering research with impact and of serving those who serve.

NATIONAL COLLABORATIONS ON BEHALF OF MILITARY-AFFILIATED FAMILIES

MFRI initiatives demonstrate how new kinds of partnerships can be built with and between national organizations — such as DoD, VA and other government entities — and community organizations or academic partners. This connects organizations with research, enabling them to deliver evidence-informed information and practices, and helps us achieve our goal of research with impact.



20/15

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& THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILITARY FAMILY RESEARCH INSTITUTE



1

Support the military communities that serve military and veteran families.

2

Strengthen the motivation and capacity of civilian communities to support military and veteran families.

3

Generate important new knowledge about military and veteran families.

4

Influence programs, policies and practices affecting military and veteran families.

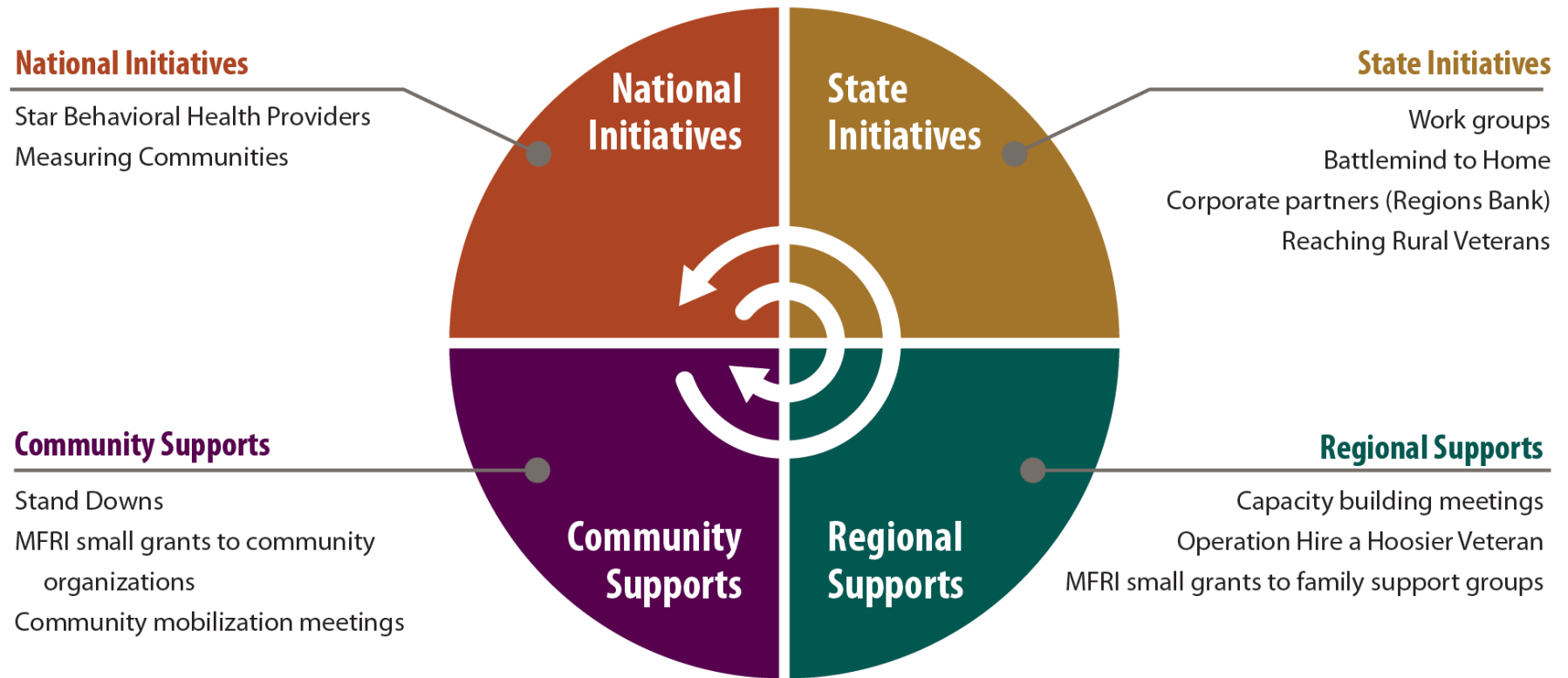
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Create and sustain vibrant learning organizations.

BY THE NUMBERS MFRI'S FIVE STRATEGIC GOALS

🏠 In 2015, MFRI celebrated its 15th anniversary. A year of special opportunities was capped by an anniversary gala.

NATIONAL, STATE & COMMUNITY EFFORTS: WORKING TOGETHER AS A WHOLE



JOINING COMMUNITY FORCES

Joining Community Forces is the National Guard Bureau's extension of the First Lady's Joining Forces campaign. It focuses the efforts of local providers to strengthen local military communities. In 2014, the Indiana National Guard (INNG) asked MFRI to share in leading Indiana's Joining Community Forces initiative. Toward this end, MFRI this year helped coordinate the establishment of a unique collaboration of military, civilian, governmental and academic partners to create Joining Community Forces Indiana (JCFI). Using data from communities around the state, representatives from the INNG, the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Indianapolis VA Medical Center, and MFRI chose to focus on employment and financial literacy as JCFI's 2015-2016 priorities.

Data collected by MFRI shows that financial problems for Indiana’s military members are not limited to any particular age group. Therefore, JCFI has prioritized all service members and veterans as beneficiaries of its work on financial literacy. The first goal: Identify and coordinate emergency assistance so that military-affiliated families can quickly access it during a crisis. To do this, JCFI is training 2-1-1 operators about military culture/impact of deployment and about military specific resources available (e.g. family assistant centers, personal financial counselors, military relief funds, etc.). JCFI also aims to increase service members’ and veterans’ understanding of financial issues. Partnerships are key, and with JCFI’s help, Regions Bank is modifying its existing curriculum to include military-specific talking points. JCFI’s employment working group has worked to identify gaps and is focused on creating a one-day training for employers.

2-1-1 OPERATORS: DISTRIBUTING RESOURCES TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM

2-1-1 is a free and confidential service that helps people across North America find the local resources they need. It makes sense to equip these operators with information that can help military-affiliated families.

REACHING RURAL VETERANS: ENGAGING FAITH COMMUNITIES

Reaching rural veterans has been a priority for the VA as well as other government agencies, including the USDA. About one-third of all veterans live in rural areas, where they have less access to crucial services. It is strategic to build services for them on a platform of existing community programs. From this perspective, Reaching Rural Veterans (RRV) was created.

RRV combines the research and educational strength of two land-grant universities with the power of the VA and USDA to provide food and nutritional education to low-income, homeless and at-risk rural veterans. The VA’s Office of Faith-Based Initiatives and Neighborhood Partnerships is partnering with MFRI, Purdue University Extension, USDA and the University of Kentucky (UK) to create RRV, which reaches more than 20 percent of at-risk veterans in the counties it serves. In addition, RRV:

- » engages local faith communities and community organizations in providing support and assistance to veteran families; and
- » connects these families with community resources and services.

The concept is simple. In each state, the land-grant university (Purdue or UK) leads the project, providing participating food pantries with education, materials and resources to use with their clientele. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) educational assistants, who already offer community educational services, provide monthly — or more frequent — on-site nutrition and health education lessons for RRV participants. Monthly veteran-specific resources include pantry visits by veteran service officers, VA homeless outreach coordinators and representatives of veteran employment and support organizations. Each faith-based food pantry participates in military cultural competency training so that they can expand their programming and community outreach efforts.

In 2015 **70** trainings
were held in **7** states with
2,650 attendees.

65,900

training hours
logged since 2010.

5,550+

military family members
treated by Tier One providers.



BEFORE & AFTER: SBHP PARTICIPANTS' GAINS IN KNOWLEDGE & CONFIDENCE



⌘ On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), participants showed significant gains in knowledge and the confidence to use that knowledge professionally.

Reaching Rural Veterans is also documenting veteran food insecurity, which is critical to understanding the needs of veterans visiting food pantries. RRV gathers quantitative and qualitative data from veteran clients which will help inform policies aiming to improve the diets of food-insecure veterans. This research enables us to better track the number of veterans coming into participating food pantries as well as the number of family and community members attending RRV events. We also track services offered at each location, and, in some cases, we documented direct information on how those services have benefited the veterans served.

SBHP: TRAINING TO CREATE MILITARY-SENSITIVE COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

Since its creation in 2010, the Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP) program has gained recognition as a model of effective collaboration on behalf of military and veteran families. SBHP started in Indiana before spreading to California, Michigan and Georgia. In 2015, SBHP expanded to New York, Ohio and South Carolina, drawing on experience of academic partners focused on military social work (South Carolina), traumatic brain injury (Ohio) and disaster response (SUNY New Paltz). Using funding from Wounded Warrior Project in Ohio and South Carolina, MFRI expanded and refined SBHP to reach even more providers. We designed a regional approach that enabled clusters of SBHP states to offer cross-state training opportunities, which is enhancing the providers' experiences as well as quality and breadth of the care they provide their clients. To date, about 150 attendees have traveled outside their home state to receive SBHP training.

MFRI continues to develop SBHP in partnership with our collaborators. We began piloting distance-learning opportunities for trainings, and these efforts have been well-received. Attendees told us that they would attend future distance-learning modules if offered. They also reported significant gains in knowledge and confidence thanks to SBHP trainings. In Michigan and California, our partners at the University of Michigan and UCLA added two new Tier Three trainings that focused on the family experience. Each addition strengthens the program, and the commitment to military-connected families.

SBHP: A MODEL FOR THE NATION

SBHP is changing the national conversation about behavioral healthcare for military members and veterans. This year, the program received recognition from Congressional and National Guard Bureau leaders as well as other policy influencers. Senate passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included the Service Member and Veteran Mental Health Care Package. This incorporated an SBHP-inspired provision that creates a “special designation for private sector, community mental health providers who demonstrate — either through training or past experience — a strong knowledge of military culture and evidence-based therapies for mental health issues common to veterans and service members.” Sponsored by Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-IN) and Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), this provision creates a regularly-updated online registry so that veterans, service members and their families can search for specially-designated community providers in their area. We are proud to have helped shape a foundation that inspired policy makers in their work on behalf of military and veteran families.

BATTLE PLAN TO SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES

One of the ways MFRI works to sustain national attention on the issues surrounding military and veteran families is through our regularly scheduled research symposia, which we have held since 2008. This year, we took our symposium to the Washington D.C. metropolitan area where more than 90 prominent leaders joined our effort to create a “battle plan” to support military and veteran families. Together, we sought to increase the effectiveness of the next generation of leaders in various positions of responsibility — across the federal government, corporations, nonprofit and educational institutions and communities. These leaders represented organizations such as:

- » The White House and U.S. Congress
- » Departments of Defense, Agriculture, Labor and Veterans Affairs
- » The Elizabeth Dole Foundation, The Bob Woodruff Foundation and Council on Foundations
- » The Center for Military Psychiatry & Neuroscience (Walter Reed Army Institute of Research), National Institutes of Health and RAND Corporation
- » Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs





⚡ SBHP has become a national model for community-based behavioral healthcare for military and veteran families.

Organizations also represented philanthropic, corporate, media, academic, healthcare, legal and community and state sectors. All came with one purpose: to help their successors benefit from more than 15 years of successes and challenges in work for military-affiliated families. The results of this symposium will be presented in the forthcoming book, *A Battle Plan for Supporting Military and Veteran Families*.

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN NATIONAL RESEARCH ON MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES

At MFRI, we promote rigor in the academic study of military families. MFRI this year created an award to recognize a single scientific article published combining exceptional rigor with important insights about military and veteran families. The presentation of the inaugural Award for Excellence in Research on Military and Veteran Families was made at a dinner generously sponsored by the Association of the United States Army, which took place at the Battle Plan for Supporting Military Families Symposium. This year, the award honored Jennifer Lundquist (University of Massachusetts Amherst) and Zhun Xu (Howard University) for their work titled “Reinstitutionalizing Families: Life Course Policy and Marriage in the Military.” Through their publication, the authors brought together life course literatures on turning points, the welfare state, and linked lives to show how military policies are part of an overarching institutional culture that directly and indirectly promotes marriage.

The Award for Excellence in Research on Military and Veteran Families stands alone as a recognition of excellence in research on behalf of military-connected families. Nominations for it were neither solicited nor accepted. Instead, a panel of 12 reviewers examined all the research on military families published during 2014, more than 150 articles in all and multiple rounds of review yielded the top article. The article appeared in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

NATIONAL RESEARCH ON CHILDREN AND MULTIPLE DEPLOYMENTS

In collaboration with the DoD, MFRI studied the impact of multiple deployments on military children. This was the first national study of young children and deployment. This is also the first time that later implications for children born during a deployment have been documented. Results of this research are now being published in academic journals. One published paper focused on military parents' efforts to seek help for their children.¹ This was the first paper published during the recent conflicts that focused on parents' help-seeking on their children's behalf. A second publication² examined the impact of parental deployment, focusing on the length of deployment and the age of the child when the parent deployed. Among children aged 3 to 5 years, a recent long deployment was associated with higher levels of generalized anxiety. For older children (6–10 years), having a parent deployed at birth was associated with more challenges, including peer problems. Through this research, MFRI has opened new territory in the scientific literature, and is building the foundation of evidence for future support services for children and families at risk.

MEASURING COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION

Since the beginning of the conflicts and combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, national, state and local initiatives have been created to help service members, veterans and their families.

¹ Flittner O'Grady, A. E., MacDermid Wadsworth, S., Willerton, E., Cardin, J.-F., Topp, D., Mustillo, S., & Lester, P. (2015). Help seeking by parents in military families on behalf of their young children. *Psychological Services, 12*(3), 231–240. <http://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000027>

² Mustillo, S., Wadsworth, S. M., & Lester, P. (2015). Parental deployment and well-being in children: Results from a new study of military families. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 1063426615598766*. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1063426615598766>



MEASURING COMMUNITIES: MAPPING PROGRESS



Much of the work at the grassroots level has been organized by individuals who want to create welcoming, supportive communities for this reintegrating population. To address the work that is happening in communities, MFRI has undertaken an initiative called Measuring Communities, a social indicators project aimed at shaping community efforts to support military and veteran families. MFRI created this effort in collaboration with the Center for Regional Development at Purdue University, with a team that has expertise in geographic data, web development, graphic design, communication and military and veteran families.

Measuring Communities is modeled after the Community Blueprint, which was developed to define key elements needed to provide adequate community support for military-connected families. Measuring Communities uses diverse, reliable and nationally-representative datasets to help provide military-specific information about communities' strengths and gaps in 10 categories, including medical care, employment and education. This interactive tool organizes data for any given geographic region and enables users to gather information. It also generates maps and creates tables and graphs that allow users to better understand the data and compare indicators.

Measuring Communities can be useful for community mobilization groups, community leaders, nonprofit and community foundations, veteran service organizations, educational experts and others. The effort has led to partnerships with four other land-grant universities: Kansas State University, Michigan State University, UCLA and the University of Kentucky. We have been supported in these efforts through USDA's Economic Research Service.

ENGAGING WITH THE NATION'S STUDENT SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

Our strong partnership with Student Veterans of America (SVA) continued this year, as SVA held a greatly expanded number of leadership summits around the country. SVA and MFRI have worked together to turn local business plan competitions into a national effort, to develop more and better ways to support chapters, and to continue efforts to learn scientifically about the key conditions promoting the success — academic and otherwise — of student service members and veterans.

This year, we were pleased to shift from presenting the content and curriculum within the *Success in 3-D: Design, Develop and Deliver a Thriving SVO* manual to helping to build a “Train the Trainer” model for the summits. We also provided methods to evaluate trainers’ individual content delivery and overall summit facilitation. All in all, this structure of support helps SVA Summits achieve a high standard of content delivery and equip student veteran leaders the opportunity to implement these skills on their home campus.

LANDSCAPE IN HIGHER EDUCATION SERIES

Our partnership with SVA was crucial to a successful release in 2015 of eight related reports on the *Landscape in Higher Education* for student service members and veterans. This series documented the promising practices and lessons learned through the work of Operation Diploma, MFRI’s original education initiative. Operation Diploma awarded grants to two- and four-year public and private institutions; the grants, and their proceeds, affected the lives of more than 6,000 student service members and veterans and strengthened postsecondary communities’ motivation and capacity to support military personnel and veterans.



The series was introduced at the SVA National Conference, where MFRI Director Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth highlighted key findings from the reports. The audience included more than 1,200 student veterans and service members who represented 475 SVA chapters, 32 partnering organizations and key national leadership. Conference speakers also included prominent dignitaries such as Vice President Joe Biden, Dr. Jill Biden and VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. Throughout the spring and summer of 2015 the reports were released by MFRI and SVA, helping to increase awareness about the best ways for campuses to address the needs of student service members and veterans.

REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS ON BEHALF OF MILITARY-AFFILIATED FAMILIES

MFRI continues to conduct research and offer outreach opportunities within the Midwest. Our research collaborations with the Indiana National Guard are helping to grow the body of scientific literature on military families. Our work with VA and other partners produced an enormously successful Battlemind to Home Symposium. Our small grants are improving communities; and our work on behalf of homeless and at-risk veterans has also developed new community awareness about this important issue.

INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENTS: RESEARCH ON FAMILY JOURNEYS

MFRI's flagship research project, Family Journeys: From Deployment to Reintegration, was funded by the DoD in 2015. For this ongoing study, we interview the INNG member, the spouse or significant other, and up to two adolescent children (if they are present in the home). These family interviews occur six times: once prior to deployment, twice during deployment and three times after reunion. By the end of 2015, MFRI had completed 1,250 family interviews, including 120 families that have completed the entire cycle of interviews. Our findings add to the growing body of literature with insights on:

- » **Coping with the stress of impending separation.**³ As families prepare for service members' departure on deployment, they encounter new stressors related to impending separation. This study focuses on the predeployment period, the last opportunity families have to prepare to deal with the separation of deployment.
- » **The impact of predeployment functional impairment on mental health after combat.** This study tracked how effective programming at predeployment can have positive spill-over after deployment.

³ Lee, K.H., Flittner O'Grady, A.E., Marini, C.M., Cardin, J.F., Collins, C.L., Topp, D.B., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S.M. (2015, November). *The role of attachment and coping on individual and family well-being among military couples during predeployment*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, Vancouver, BC.

- » **Communication during deployment.**⁴ For military couples, emerging technologies such as cell phones and video calling have created new tools for communication between at-home partners and deployed service members — as well as new communication challenges. This daily diary study offers insights on the day-to-day rhythms of communication and feelings of connection during deployments. This study used innovative methods to understand the important details about communication during deployment — not just the frequency and type, but also its content.
- » **Sibling relationships over the course of a parent’s deployment.**⁵ While previous research has shown that sibling relationships are related to youth development, this is the first-ever study of siblings and deployment. The study examined the impact of a parent’s absence during deployment on sibling relationships in military families. We found that sibling relationships became more strained during a parent’s deployment. This research helps to understand how a parent’s absence during deployment affects relationships among children, creating a better understanding of the impact of deployment on wellbeing of youth in military families.

SMALL GRANTS TO MOBILIZE COMMUNITIES

Since 2008, MFRI community small grants benefited thousands of military and veteran families thanks to the Indiana organizations and family readiness groups (FRGs) that have used them. In 2015, we awarded 25 grants ranging from \$500-\$2,500. These grants funded programs that served more than 2,500 military and veteran families.

Our small grants helped support Strong Bonds, an INNG program that works to strengthen families and single soldiers. Grants also supported job fairs and faith-based programs focused on moral injury. Using MFRI grants, three FRGs provided Family Day programming about financial literacy, leadership training, family bonding and employment readiness, while other organizations used the funds to target homeless and at-risk families. Our small grants also worked to reduce homelessness in Indiana through support of regional Stand Downs for homeless veterans.

STAND DOWNS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS THROUGHOUT THE REGION

On any given night, nearly 50,000 veterans are homeless, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. On January 28, 2015, a total of 5,863 persons were found to be without shelter in Indiana, according to the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. “Through statewide initiatives and programs aimed at combating homelessness, there has been a steady reduction in numbers, signified in a 9 percent overall decrease since 2010,” state officials said.

⁴ Wilson, S. R., Marini, C. M., Franks, M. M., Topp, D. B., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2015, November). *Communication activities and feelings of connection during deployment: A daily diary study from the perspective of at-home partners*. Presented at the Association of Behavioral Cognitive Therapies, Chicago, Ill.

⁵ Whiteman, S. D., Loeser, M. K., Covington, M., Topp, D., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. (2015, November). *Sibling relationships over the course of a parent’s deployment*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, Vancouver, BC.



12%

of U.S. homeless adults are veterans.

1,000+

blankets delivered to in-need
Indiana military and veteran families.

34%

of homeless veterans were
unsheltered compared to 28%
of all homeless adults.

MFRI and **189** volunteers
served **132** homeless, at-risk
or underemployed veterans at
the 2015 Lafayette-area Stand Down.

BY THE NUMBERS HOMELESSNESS

MFRI is part of that effort. Since 2009, we have worked to expand the number of resources for homeless and at-risk veterans. Key agencies, such as the VA and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, help lead Stand Down events hosted by communities, where military personnel, veterans and their families can access help with housing, job placement and health care.

MFRI, too, continued working in 2015 with a variety of organizations to coordinate regional Stand Down programs, offering tool kits to guide planning and grant funds to help defray costs. In addition to specific Stand Down support, MFRI received funding to organize the delivery of over 1,000 blankets from Washington D.C. to in-need Indiana military and veteran families.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING "THE STAND DOWN OPENED MY EYES TO THE NUMBER OF VETS IN NEED HERE." • "IT MADE ME WANT TO BE MORE INVOLVED." • "THE POWER OF COMPASSION IS TRANSFORMATIVE. I HOPE TO ENCOURAGE MY FRIENDS TO VOLUNTEER NEXT YEAR."

MFRI also awarded grants to help provide mentoring and intervention for veterans facing issues in the judicial system. This year, America's veteran treatment courts will serve 11,000 veterans who would otherwise be incarcerated⁶; and emerging research indicates these diversionary courts can be successful at reducing recidivism of offending veterans.⁷ Of those studied, 89.5 percent remained arrest-free during their time in the program. They reported "better treatment outcomes and quality of life"⁸ and experienced significant improvement with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and overall functioning.

Our grants also promoted collaboration. Last year we reported that an MFRI grant helped to fund a job fair put on by a community service organization in Gary, Ind., which led to the transformation of a library into a veterans' resource center. Valparaiso Law School and the Red Cross enabled the center to provide employment services, legal assistance and other resources. This year, the city of Gary donated land for veteran housing. Community members are working to secure donations of eight mobile homes that will provide temporary housing for at-risk veterans.

6 KPC News (2015, October 20). *Indiana to offer veterans treatment courts*. Retrieved from http://www.kpcnews.com/local/article_bc0addeb-1614-57a1-a4b5-95126232cad5.htm

7 Knudsen, K. J., & Wingenfield, S. (2015, February). *A specialized treatment court for veterans with trauma*. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 1-9.

8 Ibid.



🏠 At Battlemind to Home VI, attendees gained information and made connections to improve community support for military-affiliated families.

BATTLEMIND TO HOME VI SYMPOSIUM

In 2015, MFRI sponsored and organized the Battlemind to Home VI Symposium in conjunction with Roudebush VA Medical Center, INNG, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The planning committee consisted of representatives from MFRI, INNG, the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the VA's Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and the Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center. Battlemind provides the opportunity for all who are working on behalf of military and veteran families in Indiana regions and communities to gather in one space. There, they learn about the issues other parts of the state are facing. Together, they make plans for action.

With 348 attendees, the event quickly sold out and was filled to capacity with participants from 59 counties and out of state. This event featured keynote speaker retired Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, director of the Killology Research Group, who was joined by a number of other veterans and military members who helped to boost audience knowledge and understanding about military and veteran families.

WHAT BATTLEMIND ATTENDEES ARE SAYING "THE SPEAKERS ARE AMAZING, ESPECIALLY THOSE CIVILIANS WITH HIGH CREDENTIALS WHO ARE ALSO VETERANS. THEY HELP US SORT OUT THE ISSUES AND RESOURCES MORE CLEARLY. BEST OF ALL, ARE THE VETERANS WHO SHARE THEIR STORIES, PLUS WHAT IS AND IS NOT HELPFUL." • "MY WORK IN REHAB HAS BEEN POSITIVELY INFLUENCED BY MY KNOWLEDGE GAINED HERE IN BUILDING RAPPORT AND ACCOMPLISHING GOALS WITH CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES."

During breakout sessions, regional groups discussed how to address top issues and identified resources in corresponding communities. Thus, Battlemind continued to serve as an opportunity for community leaders, behavioral health providers and others to learn about how they can better share resources and gather information to serve our military and veteran families. With support from our partners, 2015's Battlemind was another thought-provoking event that engaged in dialogue those making change in their own backyards.

2015 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In 2015, MFRI celebrated its 15th anniversary with a yearlong program of special opportunities. We launched a series of anniversary celebration activities, including:

- » **On the Road with MFRI:** This series of invitation-only receptions in cities around the country enabled us to engage with MFRI friends in cities with strong military ties: Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., San Antonio and San Diego.
- » **Back to Class:** MFRI received an invitation to present to high-level Purdue University supporters at the President's Council Annual Weekend held in Naples, Florida. MFRI's panel allowed a full house of Boilermakers who are eager to learn more about how they can support families who serve our nation to interact with the newest generation of veterans and their families. The round-table discussion, called "Following in the Footsteps of the Greatest Generation," covered a variety of issues. These included topics such as the unique nature of the current conflicts; post-traumatic stress disorder; and behavioral health challenges for military, veterans and their families.
- » **15th Anniversary Gala:** One of the year's highlights was the gala, where more than 140 supporters from around the nation gathered in Indianapolis to celebrate the joint anniversary of MFRI and the Center for Families. During an evening that honored the past, celebrated the present and launched new dreams and aspirations, speakers focused on the missions of both organizations, which seek to build strong families and



⌘ Rear Admiral Joan Hunter, National Guard Bureau, delivered the keynote address for the anniversary gala.

strong communities. The evening's highlights included congratulatory wishes from U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly, keynote remarks delivered by Rear Admiral Joan Hunter of the National Guard Bureau and celebratory proclamations from Indiana Representative Sheila Klinker and Governor Mike Pence. HHS Dean Christine M. Ladisch announced new funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. and the Center for Families awarded the first Krejci Award to Elizabeth Wehrspann, a Ph.D. student who is currently working on research with the Center for Families to strengthen communication with policymakers.

LOCAL COLLABORATIONS ON BEHALF OF MILITARY-AFFILIATED FAMILIES

MFRI is proud to be a part of work being accomplished in local communities on behalf of military and veteran families. We know these grass roots efforts at changing community structures are taking shape in cities and towns across Indiana. Likewise, we are thankful for opportunities we are granted through our home at Purdue University. Not only are we connected to generous Boilermaker friends and family, we are fortunate to work with wonderfully committed and bright students. Through their work at MFRI, these future researchers, community mobilizers and leaders are already making a contribution to improving the lives of military-affiliated families.

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION GROUPS

MFRI builds local community capacity and fosters collaborative partnerships to benefit military-affiliated families through the work of our regional mobilization groups. Our regional community mobilization coordinators help educate local communities about military-specific issues and spur them on to action. This year, mobilization efforts took place in 10 groups that stretch throughout Indiana and include members from more than 100 veteran organizations. Mobilization group coordinators educated, informed, trained and connected with more than 18,000 Indiana community members. These leaders touched every county of the state.

Our mobilization groups affect these communities in a number of diverse ways. These groups work to change the climate of communities to encourage businesses and organizations to support military-affiliated families by recognizing their service. The outreach teams then provide direct services by connecting them to:

- » Housing, food pantries and social services
- » Employment and employment training services
- » Financial coaching and VA financial benefits
- » Behavioral health providers and VA health benefits
- » Volunteering opportunities
- » Suicide prevention resources and faith-based crisis mitigation



MFRI and its partners stand ready to assist on a personal level military and veteran families who find themselves in crisis. For instance, we connected an OEF/OIF veteran who was considering suicide to an organization that could help him immediately. A Vietnam veteran at the organization now mentors this veteran, helping him to work through the issues he is facing. We responded when a VA representative asked us to help a high risk, unemployed veteran in Lake County, who, along with his disabled daughter, faced eviction due to his financial issues.

PURDUE DAY OF GIVING

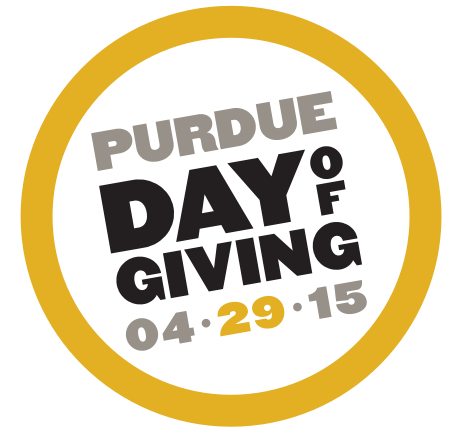
On April 29, the entire Purdue community gathered to enable opportunities and create lasting impact through Purdue's second annual Day of Giving. In just 24 hours, the community raised a record-breaking \$13.6 million from more than 9,500 gifts. MFRI contributed to this effort through the generous support of 42 donors, both individuals and corporate. Supporters of military and veteran families also increased their impact upon MFRI's sustainability through a strategic initiative challenge match made possible by university leaders. Thanks to support from Purdue's Office of the Provost, the College of Health and Human Sciences and the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, MFRI is using \$250,000 in non-recurring funds to match philanthropic gifts that establish a permanent endowment. Through this program, our donors can double their impact when they give.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RESEARCHERS AND COMMUNITY MOBILIZERS

Since 2008, more than 200 graduate and undergraduate students have worked at MFRI, making valuable contributions to the lives of military and veteran families. Through the opportunities we offer, students earn credits, build résumés and enhance their research knowledge.

A number of our students hold graduate assistantships, which help to fund their academic work as they build strong résumés through gaining experience at our organization. For our student interns, MFRI is a classroom as they work to earn academic credit. We also employ federal work-study and VA work-study students. Our students interact with and learn from some of the world's most respected military family researchers and participate in service learning opportunities such as Stand Downs for homeless veterans. Equipped with skills learned here, they have gone on to serve in the military and as researchers, professors and behavioral health specialists.

In 2015, our undergraduate and graduate students worked on outreach initiatives such as Reaching Rural Veterans, Battlemind to Home VI, Stand Downs across Indiana, SBHP and other research and administrative efforts. They also collected, analyzed and published data from research projects such as Family Journeys and evaluations of SBHP.



as the National Council on Family Relations. We have also supported students earning clinical degrees who have gone on to work with veterans and family members in counseling, medical and educational settings.

Many students have worked at MFRI for multiple years. One such student, Devin Duncan, completed her fourth and final year with MFRI in 2015 and was a tremendous asset to the teams. A military child herself, she shared the following perspective on working at MFRI:

“I have worked at MFRI for four years and gained valuable skills that will help me in the future. Over those years, I have worked with a multitude of different personality types, learned how to fix a copy machine, and helped run a project that affects hundreds of military members and their families. I have gathered data for community meetings, called businesses for discounts intended for Veterans Appreciation Week, learned how to create surveys, helped children dealing with deployment at Passport Toward Success, and gathered information about small grants. However, the previous list does not cover everything I did at MFRI in the last four years. Every task I was given, whether small or large, taught me a lesson.”

LOOKING FORWARD

We continue to believe that the path to success and longevity for MFRI is defined by doing high-quality, impactful work, creating innovations that speak to multiple constituencies, and positioning ourselves to pursue funding from a variety of diverse sources. Specifically, in the coming year, we will move forward on the following fronts:

- 1 We will continue to innovate, creating new programs to address emerging needs, such as Reaching Rural Veterans and Measuring Communities.
- 2 We will continue to build strategic partnerships. Our partnership with the Center for Deployment Psychology has been productive both in terms of impact and financial support. We are planning to develop even more partnerships to further strengthen and multiply the efforts of MFRI.

Our most important goal for the future is to continue to accomplish high-quality work that addresses important needs with impactful strategies. We invite you to join us as we continue to support and strengthen communities on behalf of military and veteran families, create new knowledge in the world of military and veteran research, and create and sustain environments of learning at MFRI and in the communities we seek to improve. Making a difference for families who serve is our driving mission and our passion — join us as we move forward with confidence.

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