

Gold Star Awareness Campaign Talking Points

Gold Star Pins

The Gold Star first appeared on flags in 1918, when families would pin a gold star over the blue service star hanging in their window to indicate that their loved one had been killed overseas. At that time President Wilson also authorized mothers to wear a gilt gold star on the traditional black mourning arm band to signify they lost a child in the war.

In 1947, the Gold Star Lapel Button (commonly called a pin) was designed and created to be presented to eligible surviving family members of service members who died while deployed in support of Overseas Contingency Operations, or who died from wounds sustained in theater (Public Law 80-306)

The Gold Star lapel pin consists of a gold star on a field of purple surrounded by laurel leaves.

The Next of Kin of Deceased Personnel lapel pin consists of a gold star on a gold background surrounded by four oak sprigs. It was approved in 1973 for the primary next of kin of service members who lose their lives while serving on active duty or while assigned in an Army Reserve or Army National Guard unit in a drill status, and is authorized for issue retroactive to March 29, 1973.

The widow or widower, each parent, each child, stepchild, child through adoption, brother, half-brother, sister, and half-sister is entitled to receive and wear these pins in recognition of their loss and the sacrifice of their loved one.

Survivor Outreach Services

Our Fallen Warriors have given— in the words of Abraham Lincoln— “the last full measure of devotion” to our nation. The Army has a commitment to their Families.

The purpose of the SOS program is to deliver on that commitment by expanding and standardizing programs and services across all components and for all Survivors; building a unified program that embraces and reassures Survivors that they are continually linked to the Army Family for as long as they desire.

The SOS Programs provides access to support, information, and services in a caring supportive environment, at the closest location to where the Family resides when and for as long as they desire.

The SOS Program is inclusive of all Survivors, both Active and Reserve Component, who have lost loved ones while on active duty, including those who died in combat/combat related injuries, accident, illness or suicide. Services are available, until the Survivors no longer desire services.

The range of services covers the entire spectrum of care, from life skills education to treatment; however, some services are contingent upon eligibility status. Services are tailored to the

needs of the Survivor and may include support groups, educational seminars, advocacy, information and referral, and/or linkage to behavioral health treatment.

The Army is committed to our Families, including our Survivors, who have sacrificed so much. They desired the very best the Army has to offer in terms of programs, services, policies and staff.

The Gold Star Pin Awareness Campaign

Although the Gold Star pins have been in existence for decades, many Americans are unfamiliar with their meaning. The awareness campaign was developed to help educate and inform the public of the significance of the pins.

“It’s heartbreaking to think that a mom wearing a gold star might have someone ask her ‘what a beautiful pin, where do I get one?’.” (*Donna Engeman, a gold star wife who manages the Survivor Outreach Services program for the Army*)

“We decided we had to do something to ensure the nation—the world—recognizes what that pin really signifies.” (*Engeman*)

“We’re committed to our survivors. We owe it to them to ensure they get the support and service they deserve for as long as they need it.”

“Educating the public on the meaning behind the gold star pins is simply another way to reaffirm to our survivors that we understand and honor the sacrifices they’ve made for our country.”

Three separate PSAs were produced by Aperture Films under contract with the Army. They consist of documentary-style interviews and narrative stories from real survivors who volunteered to be a part of the project.

The voice-overs were provided by Academy-award-nominated actor Gary Sinise.

“The PSAs include moms and dads, brothers and sisters, children, husbands, wives... The point is you might see a Gold Star pin on just about anyone, and we wanted to make sure everyone knows what that pin represents.” (*Hal Snyder, Chief of IMCOM’s Wounded and Fallen Support Services office*)

“Although the causes and circumstances of their loss may differ, we strive to continually honor their loved ones service and ensure they know they are not forgotten.” (*Snyder*)

The PSAs also serve to gently remind the American public that the freedom they enjoy comes at a cost. (*Snyder*)