

HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

LTAP NEWSLETTER

LONG TERM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



A WORD FROM THE HQMC LONG TERM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Hello Marine Corps families,

As the Long Term Assistance Program (LTAP) continues to grow, we are evolving to better serve the more than 11,000 surviving family members of Marines, both nationwide and abroad. In response to your feedback and the changing needs of our families, LTAP has transitioned to a regional approach to enhance our support, outreach, and ability to address any concerns. We now have dedicated regional representatives for the Northeast, Southeast, and Central/West. As our team continues to expand, this regional map will evolve to ensure we are even more accessible.

Although the way we reach out to families has changed, the mission of LTAP remains unwavering.

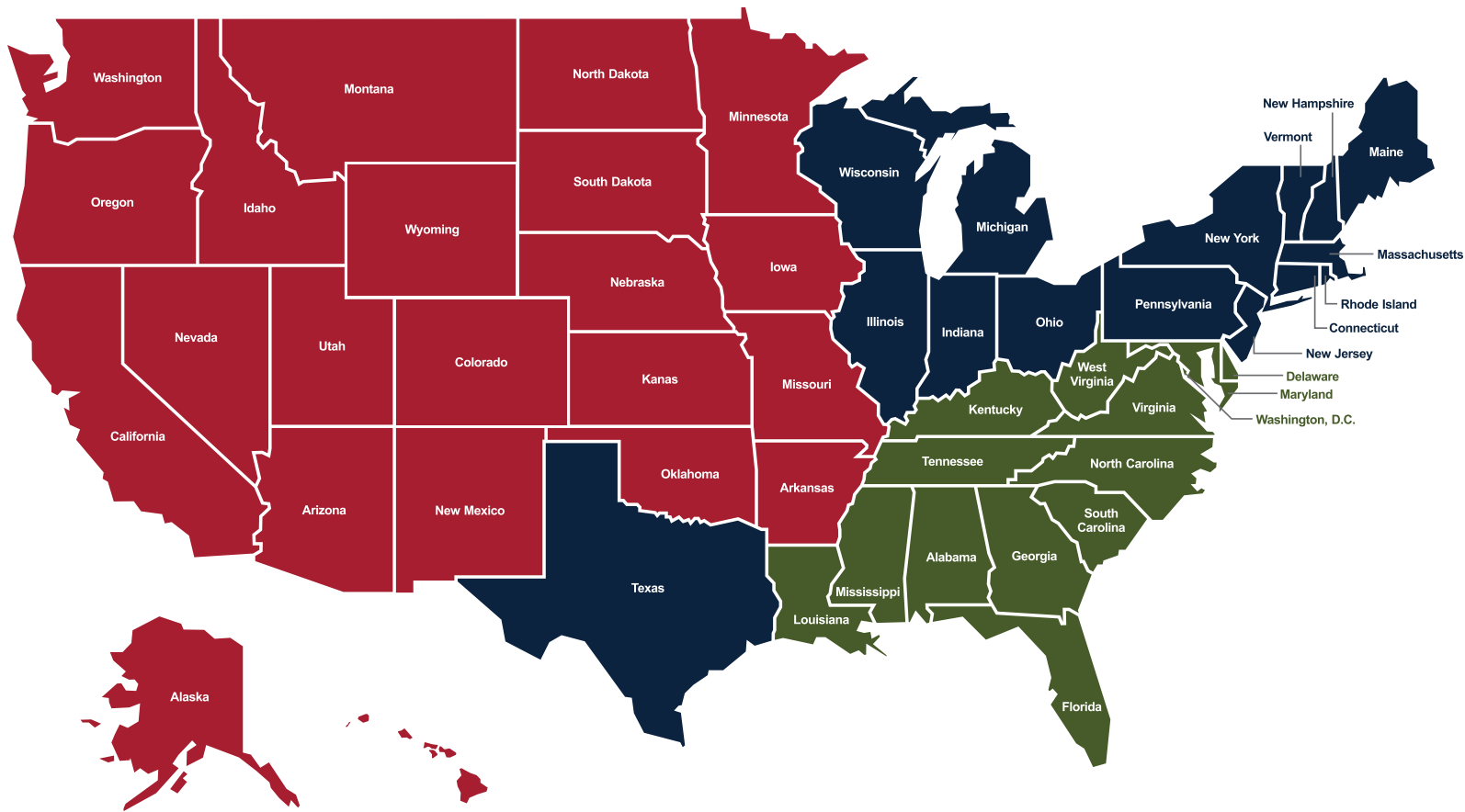
The Long Term Assistance Program (LTAP) is dedicated to providing sustained, quality support to the next of kin of deceased Marines, ensuring that their needs are met with compassion and care. Established to address the residual challenges often associated with the receipt of death benefits and entitlements, LTAP offers a comprehensive range of services. These include providing care during the movement of remains, connecting families with grief and peer support experts, and offering in-depth benefit and entitlement information through the Armed Forces Services Corporation. LTAP also helps families access investigative reports and connects them with benevolent and philanthropic organizations. This vital assistance is available indefinitely to all next of kin, ensuring continuous support for the families of deceased Marines and their loved ones.

Your experiences and insights are at the heart of these recent changes. Hearing directly from you has been essential in making LTAP a more effective and supportive resource for our surviving families. Your advocacy, insight, and feedback have been instrumental in shaping LTAP to better address emerging concerns around benefits, entitlements, and overall support. Your contributions are valued more than words can express. We are sincerely grateful for your continued involvement. Please know that we are committed to providing you with the compassionate care and support you truly deserve.

Thank you for your continued trust in LTAP. We are here for you, now and always.



HQMC LTAP REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE MAP



**NORTHEAST AND TEXAS
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

**SOUTHEAST
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

**CENTRAL AND WEST
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

CONTACT REPRESENTATIVES IN YOUR AREA:

 **1-866-210-3421 x2**

 smb_ltap@usmc.mil



ON THE JOURNEY TO HEALING: SEEK RECONCILIATION, NOT RESOLUTION

by Center for Loss | Dec 21, 2023 | Articles

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

“Mourning never really ends. Only as time goes on, it erupts less frequently.”

How do you ever find your way out of the wilderness of your grief? A number of psychological models describing grief refer to **“resolution,” “recovery,” “reestablishment,”** or **“reorganization”** as being the destination of your grief journey.

As a bereavement caregiver, you may even have been taught that the grief journey’s end comes when the mourner resolves, or recovers from, his or her grief.

But you may also be coming to understand one of the fundamental truths of grief: Grief never truly ends. People do not “get over” grief. My personal and professional experience tells me that a total return to “normalcy” after the death of someone loved is not possible; we are all forever changed by the experience of grief.

Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as you work to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death and a capacity to become re-involved in the activities of living. There is also an acknowledgment that pain and grief are difficult, yet necessary, parts of life.

As the experience of reconciliation unfolds, you will recognize that life is and will continue to be different without the presence of the person who died. Changing the relationship with the person who died from one of presence to one of memory and redirecting one’s energy and initiative toward the future often takes longer—and involves more hard work—than most people are aware. We, as human beings, never resolve our grief, but instead become reconciled to it.

We come to reconciliation in our grief journeys when the full reality of the death becomes a part of us. Beyond an intellectual working through of the death, there is also an emotional and spiritual working through. What had been understood at the “head” level is now understood at the “heart” level.

Keep in mind that reconciliation doesn’t just happen. You can help others reach it through encouraging their deliberate mourning. They reconcile their grief by...

- talking it out.
- writing it out.
- crying it out.
- thinking it out.
- playing it out.
- painting it out.
- dancing it out
- etcetera!



To experience reconciliation requires that you descend, not transcend. You don't get to go around or above your grief. You must go through it. And while you are going through it, you must express it, you are to reconcile yourself to it.

You will find that as you achieve reconciliation, the sharp, ever-present pain of grief will give rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feeling of loss will not completely disappear, yet they will soften, and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person you have given love to and received love from will never be forgotten. The unfolding of this journey is not intended to create a return to an "old normal" but the discovery of a "new normal."

To help explore where you are in your movement toward reconciliation, the following signs that suggest healing may be helpful. You don't have to see all of these signs for healing to be taking place. Again, remember that reconciliation is an ongoing process. If you are early in the work of mourning, you may not see any signs of reconciliation. But this list will give you a way to monitor movement toward healing.

SIGNS OF RECONCILIATION

As mourners embrace their grief and do the work of mourning, they can and will be able to demonstrate the majority of the following:

- A recognition of the reality and finality of the death.
- A return to stable eating and sleeping patterns.
- A renewed sense of release from the person who has died. They will have thoughts about the person, but they will not be preoccupied by these thoughts.
- The capacity to enjoy experiences in life that are normally enjoyable.
- The establishment of new and healthy relationships.
- The capacity to live a full life without feelings of guilt or lack of self-respect.
- The drive to organize and plan one's life toward the future.
- The serenity to become comfortable with the way things are rather than attempting to make things as they were.
- The versatility to welcome more change in life.
- The awareness that they have allowed themselves to fully grieve, and they have survived.
- The awareness that nobody "gets over" grief; instead, they have a new reality, meaning and purpose in their lives.
- The acquaintance of new parts of themselves that they have discovered in their grief journeys.
- The adjustment to new role changes that have resulted from the loss of the relationship.
- The acknowledgment that the pain of loss is an inherent part of life resulting from the ability to give and receive love.

Reconciliation emerges much in the way grass grows. Usually, we don't check our lawns daily to see if the grass is growing, but it does grow and soon we come to realize it's time to mow the grass again. Likewise, we don't look at ourselves each day as mourners to see how we are healing. Yet we do come to realize, over the course of months and years, that we have come a long way. We have taken some important steps toward reconciliation. Usually there is not one great moment of "arrival," but subtle changes and small advancements. It's helpful to have gratitude for even very small advancements, if you are beginning to taste your food again, be thankful. If you mustered the energy to meet your friend for lunch, be grateful. If you finally got a good night's sleep, rejoice.

One of my greatest teachers, C. S. Lewis, wrote in *A Grief Observed* about his grief symptoms as they eased in his journey to reconciliation:

There was no sudden, striking, and emotional transition. Like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight, when you first notice them, they have already been going on for some time.



Of course, you will take some steps backward from time to time, but that is to be expected. Keep believing in yourself. Set your intention to reconcile your grief and have hope that you can and will come to live and love gain.

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PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE: A guide to requesting this honorable tribute

The Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is a special recognition granted to the families of deceased military personnel, providing a formal expression of gratitude from the President of the United States for the service and sacrifice of their loved one. Below is an overview of the process for submitting a PMC request.



YOU MAY REQUEST A PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE IF:

- The Active Duty Service Member was eligible for burial in a national cemetery,
- You are the next of kin, a family member, or a close friend of the deceased service member, or an authorized service representative acting on their behalf.

YES, CLOSE FRIENDS OF A DECEASED SERVICE MEMBER CAN REQUEST A PMC.

The office responsible for processing PMC requests is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). You can submit a request through the VA's online portal or by mail. Here's a link to more information on the VA's official site for specific steps on how to submit your request at the link(s) below.

[PMC Request Form: VA Form 40-0247](#)

<https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/presidential-memorial-certificates/>

The processing time for a PMC can vary depending on factors such as the volume of requests and the completeness of the submitted documentation. On average, it may take several weeks to a few months to process and receive the certificate.

To submit a request for a PMC, certain documents may be required to verify the service of the deceased and the relationship of the requester to the deceased. The specific documents needed may include:

The DD Form 1300 (Report of Casualty): This form is provided by the Department of War and is used to report casualty incidents. It serves as proof of death for government and commercial agencies.

If you require a copy of the DD Form 1300, please contact the USMC Long Term Assistance Program office at smb_itap@usmc.mil. Be sure to include the service member's full name in your request.

The Presidential Memorial Certificate is a meaningful tribute for families who have lost a loved one in military service. By submitting a request through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, families can receive this official acknowledgment of the deceased's service. Ensure all required steps and documentation are followed to guarantee timely processing of your request.





HONORING OUR HEROES



SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBERS SHARING THEIR BELOVED MARINES STORY



SERGEANT MATTHEW R. LOWENTHAL



“HE HELPED SO MANY PEOPLE” — Michelle Lowenthal, mother of organ donor hero USMC Sgt Matthew Lowenthal. With Veteran’s Day approaching, we want to salute our military organ and tissue donors, as well as their families. USMC Sgt Lowenthal was a decorated Marine and proud ordnance tech at M.C.A.S. Miramar in San Diego. Michelle Lowenthal says Matthew was a loving son, brother, friend and mentor to all. When he passed away in 2019, Michelle received many letters from people who credited him with changing their lives. The letters said things like, “If it wasn’t for your son....” and “Matthew taught me....” Sgt Lowenthal helped many people, both in life and in death. Although he suffered fatal injuries in a motorcycle accident, he was able to save two lives when both of his kidneys were donated. His pancreas was donated for research and his tissues could end up healing as many as 75 patients. Lifesharing was humbled to carry out his donation and find matching recipients for his organs. Sgt Lowenthal’s journey with the Corps started when he joined the Young Marines in 5th grade — he served in the Devil Dogs Unit in his hometown of Orlando, Florida. His unit commander says Matthew was a hard worker who racked up almost 100 awards as a Young Marine and accumulated more than 600 community service hours. At Sgt Lowenthal’s funeral, his unit commander praised his “lifetime of dedication and self-sacrifice” and said the young Lowenthal’s humility and integrity continues to inspire those who knew him. When Sgt Lowenthal came of age, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. According to the Marine Corps Times, Sgt Lowenthal served with distinction, receiving several medals and certificates including the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (twice) and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal (twice). Sgt Lowenthal was the ultimate team player and one of his mottos was “never quit.” In one of his Instagram posts he quoted Born of Fury author Sherrilyn

Kenyon by saying, “A family isn’t always about the blood you share. It’s about those willing to bleed for you!” Sgt Lowenthal loved the Eagle, Globe and Anchor (the official insignia of the US Marines) and all it stood for. On a personal note, Sgt Lowenthal also loved turtles. Several of his Marine comrades now have turtle tattoos in honor of their beloved brother-in-arms.

Semper Fi, Sgt Lowenthal.

Submitted by: Michelle Lowenthal, surviving mother

A family isn’t always about the blood you share. It’s about those willing to bleed for you!



CORPORAL JOSHUA GUZMAN-HENAO



He was humble to anyone. He saw the good inside of people. Anybody that met him, always remember his smile. He kept saying that the Marines was his life. He will be forever missed but not forgotten.

Submitted by:
Gloria Guzman, surviving mother

SERGEANT NATHAN HALL



Tribute: My first holiday without you in seven years. 6 months seems like an impossibly long time to go without you. I'll honor you today by saving you a seat and giving thanks for the seven years' worth of memories we have together.

Submitted by: Teresa Antesberger, surviving spouse

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS COURTNEY NICOLE SEXTON



From the heart of a mother, it is with immeasurable love and profound sorrow that I honor my beloved daughter, PFC Courtney Nicole Sexton. Courtney was ambitious beyond her 18 years, fiercely loving, and cared more deeply for other people than words can express. Her decision to become a United States Marine embodied her courageous spirit and unwavering commitment to serving and protecting others. Though taken from us far too soon in a tragic accident while on active duty, her light and compassion touched everyone who knew her. Our family is eternally proud of the Marine she became, and we will carry her bright spirit and selfless love forever. Semper Fidelis, our bright star.

Submitted by Shannon Lorenzo, surviving mother

Semper Fidelis, our bright star



CORPORAL JOSHUA C. STICKLEN



Cpl Joshua C. Sticklen died December 3, 2006, when the CH-46 helicopter he was in crashed in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Josh was an Intelligence Specialist and served in Afghanistan and had been awarded the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Korean Defense Service Medal. CPL Sticklen was featured in a 2004 Marine Corps Magazine article where he explained his role in creating terrain models, which give planners and commanders a realistic view of geographic areas. Josh, the much-loved son of Maggie Sticklen of Virginia Beach, Va., and Larry and Becky Sticklen of Virginia Beach was born in Rota, Spain, but grew up in Virginia Beach and was very close with his two sisters, April Swain and husband Tony of Palmyra, Va., and Tricia Koss and husband Chris of Virginia Beach. Josh was the proud and loving uncle of four nieces that he called his “munchkins,” Kendra and Adryanna of Virginia Beach and Breanna and Mackenzie of Palmyra. Josh attended Salem Elementary and Salem Middle School and graduated from Salem High School in 2000, where he was a leader in the Navy’s JROTC program. Josh attended Tidewater Community College for two years and then fulfilled his childhood dream of joining the Marine Corps in October 2002. Josh was one of the first Virginia Beach Marines lost during Operation Iraqi Freedom, having previously served a tour in Afghanistan. Josh is laid to rest in Colonial Grove Memorial Park in Virginia Beach. IF LOVE COULD HAVE SAVED HIM, HE WOULD HAVE LIVED FOREVER!

Submitted by Maggie Sticklen, surviving mother

STAFF SERGEANT NATHANIEL RYAN MCMILLAN



Our hero is SSgt Nathaniel Ryan McMillan.

Nathan joined the Marines back in 2003 with a heart to serve! In 2005, he met and married his love Carie while serving at his first duty station in St. Mary’s, Ga. (Kings Bay). They together had four daughters, Havana, Lillian, Isabella (with Jesus and her daddy in Heaven), and Olivia. Over the years of Nathan’s career, he did tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Japan—working to serve his country and provide for his family. Above all, he loved his savior Jesus and served in the local church when he was stateside. He loved his family well and gave every ounce of himself to show them daily he loved them. In 2014, he was diagnosed with a degenerative liver disease that caused him to be placed at Wounded Warrior Battalion Camp Lejeune where he was working to regain his strength and preparing for a new life outside of the Marine Corps due to his illness. On Feb. 13, 2015, while doing his conditioning workout, he suddenly went into cardiac arrest and died in the Wounded Warrior Gym. His dedication to serve and give his all until the end was honored when the United States Marine Corps officially named the gym in his memory. It is now known as the SSgt Nathaniel R McMillan Fitness Center. He is loved forever and missed deeply by his family and friends.

Submitted by Carie McMillan-Levin, surviving spouse



GOLD STAR & SURVIVING FAMILY RESOURCE PAGE

Information, support, and connection when you need it most™

RAPIDS ID Card Office Online

Schedule ID Card Renewal appointments
idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office for Survivor Assistance
officeofsurvivors@va.gov
www.va.gov/survivors/

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) SBP Annuitants

1-800-321-1080
www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/survivors/manage/
MyPay: mypay.dfas.mil/

Social Security Administration

1-800-772-1213
www.ssa.gov

TRICARE

www.tricare.mil
East Region:
1-800-444-5445 (Humana)
www.humanamilitary.com

West Region:
1-844-866-WEST (9378)
(TriWest Healthcare Alliance)
www.Tricare-west.com

Military OneSource

1-800-342-9647
www.militaryonesource.mil/role/survivor

American Gold Star Wives

www.goldstarwives.org

American Gold Star Mothers

www.americangoldstarmothers.org

WHO SHOULD YOU NOTIFY IF YOU MOVE?

Long Term Assistance Program (LTAP)

Contact your LTAP Regional Representative with your new address so we can update your record.

DEERS (for Military ID & TRICARE Users)

Update your address in DEERS at:
milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/
800-538-9552

DFAS (SBP Recipients)

Update your address through myPay:
mypay.dfas.mil/

Or mail a DD-2866 (details at):

www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/manage/changeofaddress.html

Veterans Affairs - DIC Payments

Update your address through VA eBenefits (+ManageBenefits):
www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage
800-827-1000

Social Security

Update online at: www.ssa.gov/onlineservices
Or contact your local Social Security office.

Other VA Benefits

Update your address at: va.gov/change-address/

