



**Summer Camp
Outcomes and
Research Report**





The mission of Camp Corral is to transform the lives of the children of wounded, injured, ill and fallen military heroes by providing unique camp experience and other recreational enrichment programs. Since our founding in 2011, **nearly 29,000** children of wounded warriors have been served through our signature summer camp program. Children of wounded warriors are too often overlooked in conversation around impact of military service. While their parents volunteered to serve, military children did not have a choice, but they take their role in stride.

The #1 thing parents want the civilian community to know is that the whole family serves - including their children.

Building off youth development, resiliency research, the work of the American Camp Association, and internal research, we have identified **self-confidence, connectedness to peers, positive coping skills, and respite** as our primary outcomes. Through attendance at Camp Corral summer camp programs, children of wounded warriors have the opportunity to build a tribe of peers who understand the unique challenges of their lifestyle. This is significant as **88%** of parents indicated that Camp Corral offers the only program specifically for military children – especially those with a wounded warrior as a parent.

Military kids need the opportunity to find their tribe, their group of people who accept them and support them. This is especially important after a family separates from service. Surrounded by the civilian community, military kids may struggle to find peers who understand what it is like to live with a wounded veteran. The tribe they meet at camp understands, because they live that life too. One parent shared how important it is for their child to have a group of friends who do not ask, *“what’s wrong with your dad.”*

For a demographic characterized by a loss of peer connections, it is important to have the opportunity to feel social connectedness with peers and non-parental adult role models. Research indicates that these connections are crucial for military children. This is what Camp Corral seeks to do through providing a weeklong, overnight, summer camp program. While a child must have a parent who is a wounded or fallen warrior to attend Camp Corral, focus is not placed on this aspect of children’s lives. We emphasize the opportunity for children to experience the power of camp, surrounded by others of a shared background in an uplifting, supportive environment.

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Camp Corral provides a safe, structured outlet where emotions are normalized, and provides campers the opportunity to be around others who accept them. **Military children want to be accepted as they are.** Camp Corral's summer camp creates an environment where children feel welcome. In focus groups, many parents shared that when their child participates with Camp Corral, there is a unique freedom in being one's self – a comfort that there is no pressure or judgement. There's just the ability to let go, be their true self, and feel supported along the way.

Data collected from parents demonstrates that the program has a lasting impact on the self-confidence and overarching resilience of campers. In 2018, **75%** of parents whose child attended camp more than once, indicated that they saw a considerable improvement in their child's confidence that they attribute to their participation. Along with self-confidence, **73%** saw improved social skills, **70%** saw more competence, and **68%** saw greater independence. Aside from parent surveys, data is collected from military kids in pre-test and reflective, post-test paper surveys.

MISSION STATUS STATS

Very little is known about the experiences of and the support needed for children of wounded warriors. Camp Corral is working to fill this knowledge gap. While we continue to push the military community to ask the hard questions around military connected kids, there still is very little focus on this important group.

In 2019, **95%** of Camp Corral participants had a parent who was wounded, ill, or injured. **4%** had a parent who was fallen.

31% of warrior parents live with both visible and invisible injuries

8%* of wounded warrior parents live with a visible injury

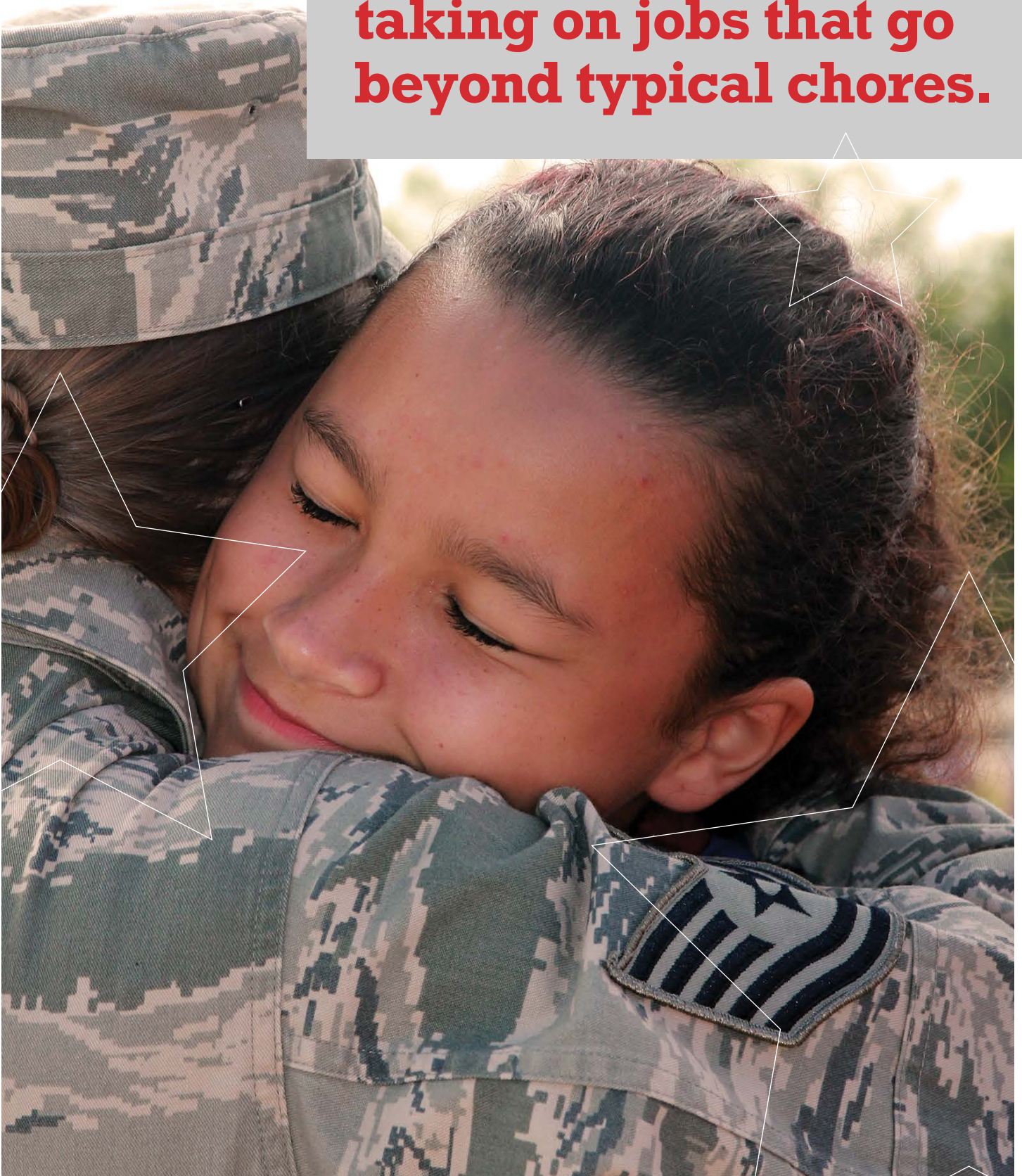
46%* of wounded warrior parents live with an invisible injury

83% of children's wounded warrior parents have separated from service. Separation results in a drastic decrease in the services available to military children.

*This is not a required question, not all people answer it therefore total will not equal 100%



Military kids are a huge help in their home taking on jobs that go beyond typical chores.



30% of our participants

serve as a caregiver for their wounded warrior parent. Military kids are a huge help in their home taking on jobs that go beyond typical chores. While their peers may have to clean their room and help with the basics around the house, children who step up as caregivers help their parent get around the house, manage younger siblings, go to VA appointments, and so much more. Children may not be the first group that comes to mind when referring to 'caregiver,' but military kids take this role in stride. Whether they are making meals or assisting their wounded parent around the house, they take on additional responsibilities to fill the needs of their families.

24% of participant

children have more than one parent who has served in the military (this may be a traditional parent, step parent, or guardian).

62.8% of active and reserve service members have children, totally over 1.6 million children (2018 DOD demographics report)

On average active duty service members have **2 children** (2018 DOD demographics report)

Research tools, baseline, and result summary were created and managed by Hannah Hutler-Boyd, Chief Program Officer at Camp Corral. Overall research and evaluation was conducted and reported by Dr. Deb Jordan, Department Chair at Eastern Carolina University's Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Using pre-surveys, immediate post surveys, and long-term post surveys, focus groups, and additional feedback opportunities, programs for military-children are evolving to serve areas of need where they will offer more benefit and create sustainable impact.



GOALS

Participating in Camp Corral makes a difference in the lives of military kids. In particular, military kids felt more connected to their peers post-camp and it is suspected that being among other military connected youth facilitated this relationship. Military kids' self-confidence increased from before to after camp, indicating that attending Camp Corral increases youth self-efficacy. **In addition, while a challenging area of their lives, military kids showed an increase in coping skills from pre-to post-camp.** Being faced with new activities and a new environment at camp and successfully negotiating those challenges can result in this type of growth. We saw that activities and having fun were noted as important pre-camp; by the time camp was over, **making connections with other military kids was the premier aspect of camp** to the youth involved. Relationships were more important to girls while task-related activities were of more importance to boys. **Older kids tended to indicate that friendships and being with other military connected youth were of high importance.** It is clear that military kids who participated in Camp Corral for more than three years gained the most in terms of making friends – particularly among other military-connected youth. They also saw attending camp as an opportunity to escape a challenging home life.

Connection

- Before attending camp less than 40% of children strongly agreed that they would make new friends at camp on the post-test measure **70% of children indicated that they made friends at camp.**
- When asked if the people they met at camp would understand them, **campers clearly had a better experience than anticipated in the pre-camp measure.** The mean for the pre-camp survey was 3.7, while the post camp mean was 4.0. This was statistically significant.
- Campers were asked if they felt that they would be able to count on their friends at camp. The pre-test had a mean of 4.08 and the post camp mean was 4.21, a statistically significant change.
- One month after camp **60%** of parents said they or their child were still in contact with people they had met at camp.
- More than **50%** of parent/guardians noticed some level of improvement in the **child's ability to establish peer relationships** both immediately before and one month post-camp.

Self-confidence

- Prior to camp, children scored the question 'I work hard even when I make mistakes' higher in the agree category. Post-camp results showed that the strongly agree response was the highest, this was a statistically significant finding.
- **After camp, it was indicated that campers were more certain that they liked to try new things.**
- 46% of campers agreed or strongly agreed that they would try something new at camp. After the session 61% indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed.
- Similarly, parent/guardians were asked to think about their camper's interest in trying new things. On the post-camp survey **66% said their child's interest in trying new things had increased; after one month had passed, 64% of parents continued to believe this.**
- **55% of parents indicated that there was positive change** in camper comfort level trying new things on their own post-camp survey.

Coping skills

- Campers were asked to indicate their expectations whether or not they would be able to talk to their friends about things that bothered them at camp. At the end of camp the question changed to a reflective tone asking if campers were able to talk to their friends about things that bothered them. The pre camp means score was 3.8 and the post camp mean score was 3.87. While numerically small difference between the means was statistically significant.
- **When asked if campers would be able to share their feelings at camp 50% agreed or strongly agreed. Post-camp 70% of campers agreed or strongly agreed**
- Next parent/guardians were asked if their camper's willingness to express emotions had changed since their participation in the Camp Corral program. This can be a challenging aspect of children's developmental abilities and the rating scores and means demonstrate this. It is interesting to note that the change in emotional expression remained the same from post-camp to one-month-post. The mean rating for the immediate post-camp question was 3.37, while one month later the mean rating was 3.40.
- Improvement in the camper ability to persevere – to work through challenges in a positive way – was the next item on the survey. The mean rating for post-camp was 3.44 and the mean score one-month post camp was 3.66. This demonstrates a slight increase in willingness to persevere over time

Other outcomes

- **Immediately following camp, 70% of parents shared that they had seen improvement in their child's overall mental health.**



This data shows us that campers felt more connected to their peers after camp. They also increased their self-confidence and indicated that camp had a positive effect on the perception of self-efficacy. Children also demonstrated increased coping skills.

RESPIRE

- Prior to their child attending camp, parents were most likely to share that giving their child **a worry-free week to just be a kid** was the number one reason they wanted their child to attend camp. 46% listed this as their top reason.
- During focus groups, parents indicated that they continued to send their child to camp because they had the opportunity to be themselves away from the drama of school and challenges of home life.
- In focus groups, parents shared that their children need opportunities to get away from the structure of daily life. Camp provides a different kind of structure that allows children to choose the activities they want to try without having to follow set curriculum.
- Children participating in focus groups shared that the opportunity to get away from home and be themselves was an important aspect of camp, something that made them want to go back year after year.





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