

September Edition: God Bless the USA . . . A Call to Action and Prayer



God Bless the USA: A Call for Action and Prayer
*Learning how to honor and support veterans
with invisible injuries and their families*



L to R: Jim (Stacie's husband), Stacie, Second Lady Karen Pence, and Carrie visit at a recent event where Stacie and Carrie sang, "God Bless the USA."

A little over a week ago, the crowd stood with hands lifted and started to sing along with us as we sang "God Bless the USA." It was more emotional for us than usual. You could see the passion, tears, and gratitude for freedom in the faces of the audience: Governor Kim Reynolds (IA) held her hand up high as she sang with us and Second Lady Karen Pence stood with her hand over her heart as she was visibly moved as the singing continued:

*"And I'm proud to be an American
Where at least I know I'm free
And I won't forget the men who died
Who gave that right to me
And I'd gladly stand up next to you
And defend Her still today
'Cause there ain't no doubt
I love this land
God Bless the USA."*

We won't forget it: While seeking to be a blessing to veterans, we experienced God's blessing in a special way as we sang *God Bless the USA*: You see, God used the audience to touch our hearts.

When interacting at the event, veterans and families of veterans tugged at our heartstrings. And, in a special way, it inspired our hearts to see and hear the crowd so unified in honoring veterans and asking God to bless our nation. It was unforgettable!

Remembering Veterans and Families

Today, we all need to consider this question: Where would we be without our veterans and servicemen and women? The land of the free would be nonexistent without their sacrifices.

Little wonder that "God Bless the USA" stirs our emotions: It reminds us of the undeniable immensity of the sacrifices of heroes for each of us personally. The fact that we live and live in the land of the free really can be traced to the blood of the brave.

While we can never repay them for their selfless sacrifice, we can always prioritize honoring our heroes, caring for veterans, and offering support to the families (including the heroic families of the fallen). Their modesty is to be admired, yet it sometimes makes it harder for people to remember that they deserve honor. But they also need our support.

Urgent Needs of Veterans with Invisible Injuries

Many veterans bravely live with visible and invisible injuries: depression, post-traumatic stress, suicidal thoughts, and/or general discouragement. Sadly, these continue to climb among veterans of all ages. The statistics continue to point to a desperate need for better care for veterans at risk of suicide. For example, according to a study of the cause of death in veterans who had been deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the suicide risk for veterans is up to 61% higher than the general population (Kang, Bullman, Smolenski Skopp, Gahm, & Reger, 2015). Kang et. al (2015) further noted that, of the 1650 deaths of these veterans, 351 were due to suicide. This equated to 21.2% of the veterans died due to suicide. This is beyond tragic.

These numbers aren't just numbers. These numbers are people. Heroes. And these heroes left behind families. This is urgent and heartbreaking; we need to offer veterans and their families adequate support, resources, and prayer. They have done so much for us; we need to be there for them in any way we can.

This is why we appreciate the Second Lady of the United States so much: She is a military mom

who is working hard to reach out and support our nation's heroes and their families. We enjoyed visiting with her at a special event in Des Moines, Iowa earlier this month. While at the event, we learned more about Mrs. Pence's work to give support to veterans and military families and her mission called Art Therapy: Healing with the HeART, which is dedicated to providing art therapy to veterans.

The Amazing Hard Work of Second Lady Karen Pence

Art therapy improves and enhances the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. Mrs. Pence said, "[Anyone with] cancer, anxiety, PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, eating disorders, autism, end of life issues, abuse, and much more...can benefit from art therapy."

Indeed, the art therapy process actually changes brains. Research continues to unveil the physical effects of art therapy. For example, the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) is a Department of Defense organization. NICoE is using imaging to take images of how it changes the electrical and other critical signals of the brain, thus creating a map of brain function. This allows researchers to study and prove the positive effects of art therapy.

Therefore, this edition of Unite the USA focuses on honoring veterans and bringing awareness to the high suicide rate. Please share it with your friends. We also want to bring hope and help by providing resources and sharing about ways to help with depression, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal thoughts. HeART is one example of an effective way to help. Read on to learn more.

Friends, let's all do what we can to help our heroes. Be there for them with actions and prayers. After all, they were there for you. They were there for us. **As we do so, may we all sing and pray for God to bless the USA.**

In God we still trust,

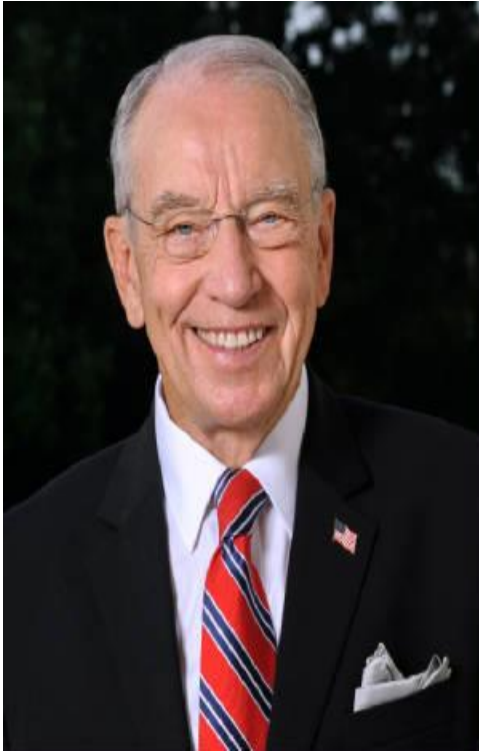
Carrie and Stacie Stoelting

Sisters and Founders of Unite the USA

Reference

Kang, H. K., Bullman, T. A., Smolenski, D. J., Skopp, N. A., Gahm, G. A., & Reger, M. A. (2015). Suicide risk among 1.3 million veterans who were on active duty during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 25(2), 96-100. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2014.11.020>

Featured Quote



"It is important we honor those who serve in our nation's Armed Forces. It's also important to raise awareness about the epidemic of suicide among veterans and to do everything we can to help those who served our country in uniform. Every day, twenty-two veterans are lost to suicide, leaving behind grieving families and loved ones across the country. That's thousands of men and women every year. This is a national tragedy. We need to let our veterans know that we appreciate their service and make sure mental health resources are available to them."

-Senator Chuck Grassley

This Month's Bible Verse

"Let us not become weary
in doing good, for at the proper time
we will reap a harvest if we
do not give up." Galatians 6:9



"Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Galatians 6:9

Karen Pence on Healing with the HeART



Second Lady Karen Pence briefly defines art therapy and explains why it helps. [Click here](#) to learn more about her initiative called Healing with the HeART.

Resources for Veterans and Military Families

We've compiled a consolidated list of important resources to bring healing, help, and hope to veterans, current servicemen and women, and their families.

1. Visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](#) and [MilitaryCrisisLine.net](#) to connect with confidential support. Or, call 1-800-273-8255 for immediate, confidential help. The Military Crisis Line, text-messaging service, and online chat provide free VA support for all Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and all Veterans, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

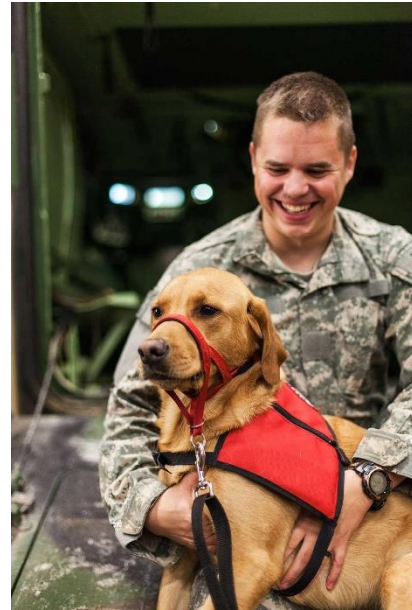
2. [The Puppy Jake Foundation](#) is dedicated to helping military veterans through the assistance of well bred, socialized and professionally trained service dogs. We are proud to select, train and place only the best-performing dogs with these deserving men and women. This is an effective way to support our heroes with effects of combat including post traumatic stress.

3. Art Therapy: Healing with the HeART: Visit Mrs. Pence's [blog](#) to learn more about art therapy or check out [American Art Therapy Association](#) to learn more.

4. [National Center for PTSD](#) offers resources and help. Learn more about treatment options and available support.

5. The [Real Warriors Campaign](#) encourages help-seeking behavior among service members, veterans and military families coping with invisible wounds.

6. [Military OneSource](#) is your 24/7 connection to information, answers and support to help you reach your goals, overcome challenges and thrive. As a member of our military family, you are eligible to use this Department of Defense-funded program anytime, anywhere. Turn to Military OneSource for tax services, spouse employment help, webinars and online training, relocation and deployment tools, and much more.



Ways to Thank Veterans and Families

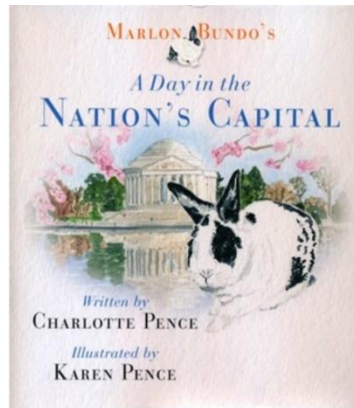


Veterans Day is just around the corner. Time moves so fast; now is the time to start planning how you are going to acknowledge our heroes and their families this Veterans Day. Here are some helpful tips:

5 WAYS TO HONOR HEROES

1. Let us help you honor the heroes in your life. If you have a loved one who is a veteran or who is currently in the military, send Stacie and Carrie his or her picture, name, military branch, rank to info@uniteheusa.org. Unite the USA will post the information online as a way to honor and thank them.
2. Be sure to set aside time to thank our heroes. Thank them in person, on the phone, in a card, or through an e-mail.
3. Post about Veterans Day on social media so that your friends can reach out to our heroes, too. Write notes of thanks to veterans you know on social media like FaceBook and Twitter.
4. Don't forget our hospitalized heroes or elderly veterans in nursing homes. Send a colorful card, send a gift, or stop by and visit. Note: *In God We Still Trust* and Unite the USA make great gift ideas! :)
5. Invite a veteran to dinner, send a gift card to their favorite restaurant, or order/deliver a meal for them. Take him or a her a gift. Just do something to show that you care and that you are grateful for their service.

Enter to Win



This month, we're offering another TWO book giveaway contest! Enter to win a copy of a beautiful children's book called Marlon Bundo's A Day in the Nation's Capital illustrated by Karen Pence and written by her daughter Charlotte Pence. The book features the Pence family's pet bunny named Marlon Bundo. We are also giving away a signed copy of *Unite the USA* by Stacie and Carrie. The last day to enter is October 11, 2019. A winner will be selected at random on October 12 and notified via e-mail. Entry form must be completed in its entirety. One entry per person. Enter here: <http://unitetheusa.org/id143.html>

Why I Chose My Initiative, Art Therapy: Healing with the HeART

By Karen Pence



first became aware of art therapy in 2006 when my husband and I were invited to do a tour of Disneyland with Preston Padden, who at the time was a lobbyist for Disney. He took us around the park and I asked some of the illustrators, because I'm an art teacher, if I should still be teaching the fundamentals of drawing or should I be using more computer assisted art techniques. Preston said, "Karen, I never knew you were an art teacher. You have got to get involved with Tracy's Kids."

At the time, I didn't know anything about Tracy's Kids, but It is an art therapy program for children with cancer in Washington, DC. Tracy's Kids was started by Matt Gerson, who had leukemia as a child, and he went to a very sterile hospital. As an adult he said, "Surely, we can do more." He partnered with Tracy Counsel and together they started Tracy's Kids. Today, the art therapy program is in seven facilities in five states.

I observed an art therapy session at Tracy's Kids for the first time in 2006 and I was amazed by it. There were children who asked their parents, "When can I get my next infusion?" I thought there has to be something to this program and I wanted to get involved. I joined the board of Tracy's Kids in 2011.

By now, you may be wondering, "what is art therapy?" Believe me, I understand. I knew nothing about art therapy when I first heard about it. Art therapy, according to the American Art Therapy Association, is a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is three

pronged, involving the art, the therapist, and the client. When I sit in the kitchen, get my watercolors out, and turn on music, that is "therapeutic" art; it is not art therapy. Art therapy is when you're actually working with a trained therapist. It is not arts and crafts. I have a master's degree in art education and I can't practice art therapy. I am not an art therapist.



Everywhere I go I see new uses for art therapy. From cancer, anxiety, PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, eating disorders, autism, end of life issues, abuse, and much more. In fact, anyone can benefit from art therapy.

Art therapists have a doctorate or master's degree in art therapy. They are psychotherapists. Art is the medium they use. Their mission is to advocate the expansion of art therapy services to clients. We have about 5000 art therapists in the United States today.

I am honored to have this national and international platform to shine the light on art therapy. I hope you continue to follow along as I will share stories about my visits across the United States and around the world to elevate art therapy.

Art therapy is near and dear to my heart. To learn more about my initiative, Art Therapy: Healing with the HeART, [click here](#). To stay updated on our events in the Office of the Second Lady, follow us on Twitter at [@SecondLady](#).

About the Author



Karen Pence, wife of Vice President Mike Pence, is a mother, educator, and award-winning watercolor artist. As Second Lady of the United States, Mrs. Pence works to bring attention to art therapy and to the sacrifices made by military service members and their families.

Mrs. Pence dedicated 25 years in the classroom as an elementary school teacher before becoming the First Lady of Indiana in 2013. In her role as First Lady of Indiana, Mrs. Pence created the Indiana First Lady's Charitable Foundation, a 501 (c)3, established with the purpose to encourage and support youth and families of Indiana. The Foundation's board awarded over \$600,000 in grants to charities throughout Indiana in three years.

As Second Lady of the United States, Mrs. Pence is committed to raising awareness and educating the public about the mental health profession of art therapy in the United States and around the world. She has observed art therapy programs in the Asia Pacific region, Australia, Europe, South America, Africa, Canada, and across the

United States.

Mrs. Pence is the honorary chair of the Art Therapy Initiative at Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health in Indianapolis and is a member of Riley Children's Foundation. She also serves as a board member for Tracy's Kids, an art therapy program for young cancer patients.

In February 2017, Tracy's Kids honored Mrs. Pence with the Courage Award for her support of art therapy programs across the United States and world. Children's National Health System also recognized Mrs. Pence for her support of art therapy and presented the Second Lady with the Hero Award in February 2017. In March 2017, Mrs. Pence received the Sister Cities International Diplomatic Leadership Award for her exceptional support of Sister Cities International mission: to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation-one individual, one community at a time. In July 2017, Sister Cities International appointed Mrs. Pence to serve as the Honorary Vice Chairwoman for Sister Cities International.

In October 2017, Mrs. Pence launched her art therapy initiative, Healing with the HeART. She wants to elevate the profession so that people understand that art therapy is a mental health profession, and not arts and crafts. The Second Lady also wants to help people understand that art therapy is an option for various conditions, illnesses, and life experiences; and to encourage young people to go into the profession. To learn more, read why Mrs. Pence chose this initiative and watch her video.

Mrs. Pence also serves as an encourager to military service members, spouses, and their families. She has hosted and participated in numerous events to honor and recognize all of those in the Armed Forces. In September 2018, Mrs. Pence launched an awareness campaign to elevate and encourage our nation's military spouses. As part of the campaign, Mrs. Pence educates military spouses about the available resources and opportunities to support spouses and their families. In August 2019, the American Legion Auxiliary awarded Mrs. Pence the Public Spirit Award for her contributions that positively impact communities through service to our military, veterans, and their families.

Mrs. Pence earned a B.S. and M.S. in Elementary Education from Butler University in Indianapolis. She is a Blue Star mom with a son in the United States Marine Corps. Mrs. Pence and Vice President Mike Pence have been married since 1985 and are proud parents of their adult children, Michael and his wife Sarah, and daughters Charlotte and Audrey.

Order Now



Unite the USA: Discover the ABCs of Patriotism is a book by **Stacie Ruth and Carrie Beth Stoelting**. It's a book that empowers patriots to make a big difference in the land we love. With 100+ ways to make a positive difference in America, *Unite the USA* is a must-have tool for patriots. *Unite the USA* will inspire and educate Americans to defend faith and freedom. (Important Note: All proceeds go to fund the mission of UnitetheUSA.org.) [Order it here today!](#)

In God We Still Trust
an inspiring album dedicated to God and veterans
by Stacie and Carrie Stoelting



Per request from veterans who love patriotic and inspiring music sung by Stacie and Carrie, [In God We Still Trust](#) was recorded. From the National Anthem to "God Bless America" you will be inspired and uplifted about our God-given freedoms. All proceeds go to Unite the USA. Help promote faith and freedom in America. Your support is important and appreciated. [Buy or download a copy today.](#) God bless you as you celebrate the red, white, and blue!

In God We Still Trust Video

Our country needs to turn to Jesus. Listen to "In God We Still Trust" for inspiration to keep "fighting the good fight". For hope and encouragement, listen to Stacie Ruth and Carrie Beth sing "In God We Still Trust".



Share and Sign Up

Be sure to share this edition with your friends. Sign up for Unite the USA's free monthly e-mail [here!](#)

Booking Info



Celebrate the true spirit of America with Carrie Beth and Stacie Ruth. Book Stacie and Carrie for concert or conference! E-mail info@unitetheusa.org for more information.

Unite the USA www.unitetheusa.org