



10 Super Ways to Support Super spouses on the Homefront

1. **Supply free childcare.** With one half (or ONE WHOLE, for single parents!) of the two-person parenting team down for the count, the responsibility of raising children alone can sometimes become daunting. Offering free childcare is one of the greatest gifts you can give to a military spouse. Offer childcare in a group setting (ask volunteers at your church, youth group, Rotary or other club to donate a few hours per month to watch military children in a public setting) or on an individual basis (snatch the neighbor's kids – with permission! – and take them to the pool for a few hours so the at-home parent can take a nap). Be sure to take safety precautions with any group babysitting event (perform background checks on all volunteers, implement multiple-person teams and choose environments that are clean and child-proofed). It will do wonders for the homefront spouse's sanity, strength and morale.
2. **Prepare free food.** Cooking for one – or while you're missing the one who usually DOES the cooking – is just not fun. Offer church potlucks, organize social get togethers and provide appetizers, meals or desserts. Drop a lasagna by a military friend's house one day, or invite a military family you know over for dinner. There's no faster way to attract spouses living on cereal for dinner on the homefront.
3. **Mow the lawn.** You can help out a military family tremendously by offering to pick up this time-consuming chore for free or at a reduced fee throughout deployment.
4. **Shovel the driveway.** In posts like Fort Wainwright, Alaska, mowing services aren't as in demand as sidewalk and driveway shoveling services. In areas where temperatures reach negative temperatures, most families don't want their children outside in the extreme cold. This means that spouses on the homefront have to find a time when their children are sleeping or elsewhere to shovel their drives. Taking care of this trivial (but labor-heavy) task is a HUGE blessing for these families.
5. **Offer mechanical or handy services.** Murphy declares that every appliance and house feature breaks the moment Soldier walks out the door. Churches, community groups and individuals can meet the needs of at-home spouses in creative ways! One Alaskan church offered a Rent-a-Spouse program. The church compiled a list of all the people, men and women, in the church who had various skills, from plumbing to electrical to handiman to electronical. When something broke and a homefront spouse didn't know whether to call a professional, he or she could first call one of the volunteers from this list to have him/her check out the problem or perform the service for him/her.
6. **Provide encouragement.** When all is said and done, the house will get taken care of. But not every homefront spouse will. Homefront spouses need to know that someone cares about their situation, someone cares about their feelings, someone cares that they are serving their country, too. Taking time to love on, encourage and emotionally support these spouses through cards, get togethers, phone calls, emails, late-night talks and small packages and gifts is absolutely the best present you can offer. When these homefront heroes feel emotionally supported, they can then support their families. When they support their families, they can then better support their service members. And when they support their service members, their service members can perform their jobs confidently and safely. Encouragement is the gift that keeps on giving.

7. **Throw inspirational events.** Collaborate with a local organization like a church, sports league, community club or non-profit to set up a free inspirational event for the spouses of a local deployed unit. One Fairbanks VFW once offered a Spouse's Day Out where the veterans of the association offered great food, free childcare, free limo rides and pedicures and manicures to the spouses who attended the event. Another Fairbanks church hired a motivational speaker to travel to Fairbanks and address all the spouses in the deployed unit. Volunteers from the church set up a tea party with desserts, decorations and door prizes, and the guest speaker encouraged the audience throughout various afternoon events. The event doesn't have to be expensive; it just needs to offer spouses a place to be encouraged.
8. **Adopt a homefront family.** At several posts around the nation, local businesses and churches run an Adopt a Family program. Volunteers from the designated business or organization adopt one homefront family in the deployed brigade. Throughout deployment, this adopting family prays for the military family, invites the military family over to dinner, offers services to the military family and simply loves on them. If you aren't part of an organization, adopt a family individually. Commit to serving that family in some way at least once every other week for the entire length of the deployment. It will make a huge difference for that family on the homefront.
9. **Send a Deployment Survival Kit.** Most civilians agree that sending packages to deployed soldiers is a normal practice, but many people forget about the families of those soldiers on the homefront. This example Deployment Survival Kit, which costs anywhere between \$20 and \$50 and will fit in one flat-rate box, is sure to encourage your homefront military friend. Include the following contents with a letter explaining the purpose of each:
 - a. A funny movie or tickets to a comedian's show – because every spouse needs something to laugh at when there doesn't seem to be a lot else to laugh about.
 - b. A special treat or box of cake or brownie mix – because dessert is one of life's greatest coping mechanisms.
 - c. A super-sized Hershey's kiss (like the kind found in stores on Valentine's Day) – so that a kiss is never too far away.
 - d. A journal – to write down all those everyday exciting things that spouses forget to tell their service members when they only get to talk for 15 minutes every two weeks.
 - e. A gift certificate to a pizza or other carry-out type restaurant – because on those bad deployment days, every spouse deserve a cooking break.
 - f. Paper plates – because no spouse should have to cook *and* wash dishes every night for 12 months straight.
 - g. An inspirational military, marriage or deployment book – because reading positive, inspirational books keeps a spouse's mind on the positive, productive things he or she can do during deployment instead of the crappy, crummy parts of being separated from her service member for months at a time.
 - h. A coupon for free babysitting – is any explanation needed?
 - i. A loving and affirming card – because positive, loving, encouraging words make all the difference during the trial of deployment.
 - j. A Bible – because ultimately, the best and most enduring encouragement and peace comes from knowing that God is in control.
10. **Pray.** Ultimately, there is no better way to bless, encourage, support and give peace to families challenged by the trials of war.