

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.”

-Ronald Reagan



2024

ANNUAL REPORT



OUR MISSION

Founded in 2009, Our Community Salutes-USA (OCS) is the only national, nonprofit organization that recognizes, honors, and supports high school seniors, and their families, who plan to enlist in the military following graduation. Reconnecting American communities with our nation's military is central to our purpose.



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MESSAGE FROM DR. KENNETH HARTMAN

Founder & President, Our Community Salutes - USA



What a difference a year can make.

As I reflect back on 2024, I am immensely proud of what Our Community Salutes (OCS) has accomplished, and the impact we have made in communities across the country. Young adults making the selfless decision to serve our nation deserve our utmost respect and support, and I am honored that OCS has played a role in doing so.

When I founded OCS over 16 years ago, I never could have imagined the reach we have as an organization today. Since 2009, over 250,000 new enlistees have been honored at Enlistee Recognition Ceremonies across 32 states and territories. We have also welcomed nearly half a million other attendees to our ceremonies, including parents and family members of new enlistees, business and community leaders, veterans, military officers and elected officials. This year, we achieved double-digit growth in the number of ceremonies we were able to offer.

OCS remains alongside new enlistees and their families through every step of their military journey. OCS ConnectSM was created to share supportive resources designed to empower enlistees and military families with education and career opportunities, financial planning, podcasts, learning modules, and community-focused events. I am proud that we serve as a trusted resource to provide this critical information.

Reconnecting American communities to our nation's military is central to our purpose. Initiatives such as the OCS Virtual Thank You Card, our STEM and General Colin Powell Memorial Service Awards, and our Veteran Serving Organizations and corporate partnerships are all examples of how we are working with this purpose.

All of the accomplishments you are about to read in the following pages would not have been possible without those who have joined in on our mission. There is only one thing I can say - thank you. Thank you to our donors, volunteers, community leaders, staff, and everyone else who has touched our organization in even the smallest of ways. Your support is invaluable.

With gratitude and best wishes,

Dr. Kenneth E. Hartman

Dr. Kenneth E. Hartman (USA, Vet.)
Founder & President, Our Community Salutes - USA

MESSAGE FROM LTG JOSEPH ANDERSON

Board Chairman, Our Community Salutes - USA



Our country is facing an unprecedented crossroad, as fewer and fewer young adults are making the decision to serve their country in uniform.

I served in the United States Army for nearly 40 years. I commanded units from platoon to corps, and culminated my career as the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, where I was responsible for Soldiers deployed in 140 countries as well as supporting all emergency operations in the U.S., including relief efforts for disasters such as Hurricanes Irma, Maria and Florence. I have led successful military and civilian operations on four continents, where we built positive and effective relationships with local constituencies, international government leaders, heads of state on three continents, and senior military and diplomatic teams. I worked in nation-building in two countries, dealing with everything from infrastructure and healthcare, to banking systems. I also served as the Commanding General of the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, NC, as well as the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, a coalition of 48 nations, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

I am not listing my accolades to be vaunt, but rather to share the incredible opportunities the United States Military has provided me, and to emphasize the pride I take in my service. Every person who puts on a uniform and makes the selfless decision to serve our great Nation deserves to not only be recognized, but supported by the communities they are risking their lives to protect.

At the end of the day, it's all about our new Soldiers

Serving as the Chairman of the OCS board is not a role I take lightly. We have an important job to do, and I am honored to help do it. Despite the current challenges facing our Nation and military recruiting, I am confident the future of our country is bright.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the success of this organization. I am proud of the accomplishments we made in 2024 and look forward to continuing to watch it grow in 2025.

Joseph Anderson

Lieutenant General Joseph Anderson (USA, Ret.)
Board Chairman, Our Community Salutes - USA

2024 ENLISTEE RECOGNITION CEREMONIES

Each spring, OCS honors thousands of military-bound high school graduates in Enlistee Recognition Ceremonies across the nation. These ceremonies bring communities together to recognize the selfless decision these young adults have made, while creating strong networks of support and resources for new enlistees and their families as they embark on their military journey.



42

total ceremonies, spanning 20 states + Puerto Rico and the USVI

20% increase in ceremonies from 2023



4,000

parents and guardians



11,100+

total attendees

9% increase in attendance from 2023



1,000+

military recruiters



3,100+

new enlistees honored

25% increase in enlistees from 2023



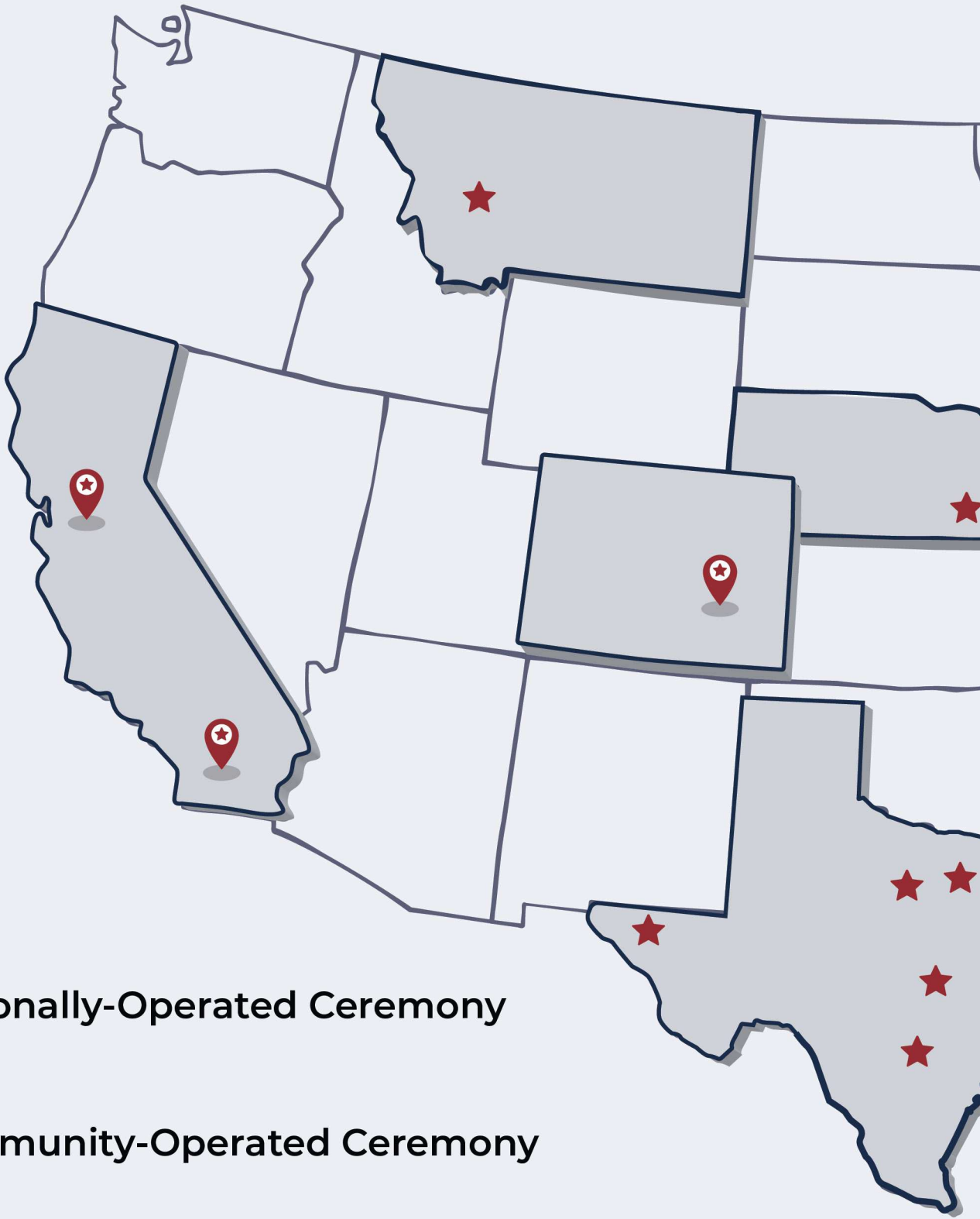


“The OCS Ceremony showed me, for the first time, there were people in my community who supported my decision to serve. I will never let them down.”

New Enlistee, 2024



2024 CEREMONY LOCATIONS



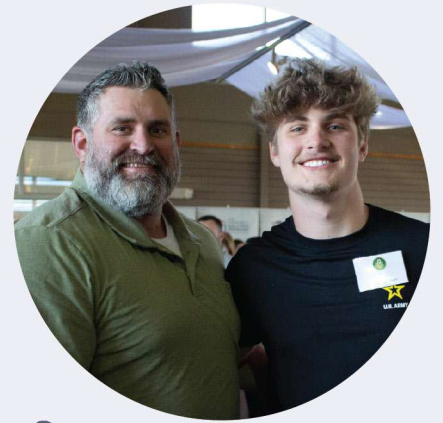
Nationally-Operated Ceremony



Community-Operated Ceremony

“My dad served 18 years (1998 - 2015) and he said it was completely different than what he had growing up and enlisting. It really drives the meaning of serving into the hearts and minds of all who attended - enlistees, parents, everyone.”

New Enlistee, 2024



2024 CEREMONY SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

OCS Enlistee Recognition Ceremonies offer a unique opportunity to hear from and network with speakers leading various sectors across the nation and abroad. 2024 was a year filled with fantastic speakers including former presidents, governors, Congressional and state representatives, education officials, military officers, and business leaders.



Major General Johnny Davis
 Commanding General, United States Army Recruiting Command
 OCS Ceremony - Lowcountry, SC



Major General William Bowers
 Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command
 OCS Ceremony - Rochester, NY



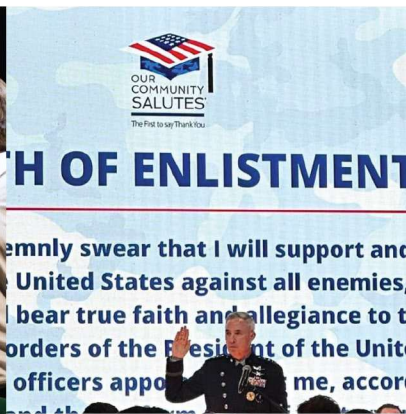
Brigadier General Christopher Amrhein
 Commander, Air Force Recruiting Service
 OCS Ceremony - South Jersey



Rear Admiral Lex Walker
 Former Commander, Navy Recruiting Command
 OCS Ceremony - South Jersey (2023)



Captain Ben Keffer
 Commanding Officer, U.S. Coast Guard Recruiting Command
 OCS Ceremony - Pensacola, FL



General Stephen Whiting
 Commander, U.S. Space Command
 OCS Ceremony - Colorado Springs, CO



Major General Jonathan Stubbs
 The Adjutant General, Arkansas National Guard
 OCS Ceremony - Arkansas



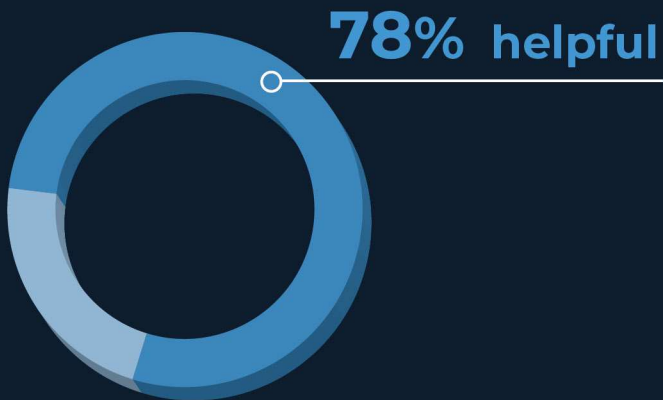
Major General Janeen L. Birkhead
 The Adjutant General, Maryland National Guard
 OCS Ceremony - Baltimore, MD



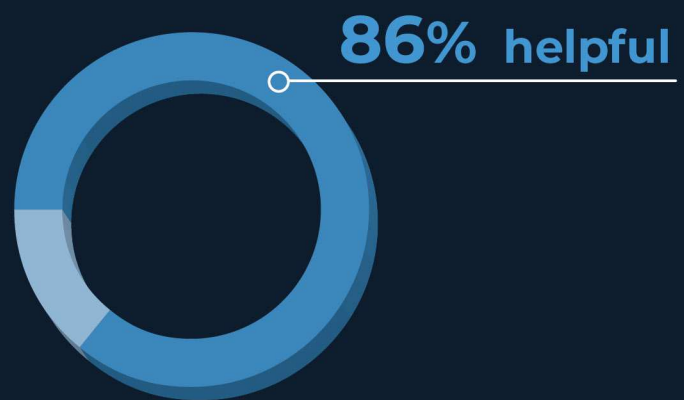
2024 NATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

MILITARY RECRUITERS

Relative to helping your recruiting mission, the ceremony was:

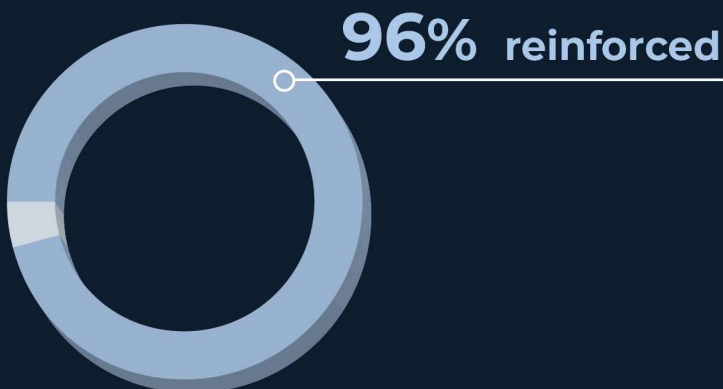


Relative to preparing the enlistee for military service, the ceremony was:



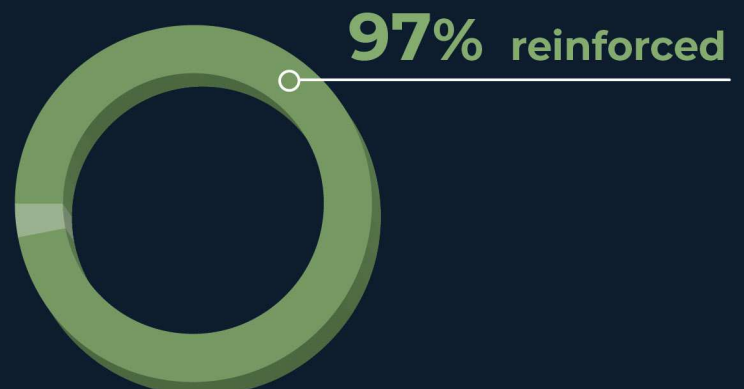
NEW ENLISTEES

To what extent did the ceremony reinforce your decision to enlist into the military?



PARENTS/GUARDIANS

To what extent did the ceremony reinforce your comfort with your child's decision to enlist into the military?





DAUGHTER OF THE HIGH CHIEF

The Fraiai family has a long legacy of military service.

Delexis' father is a U.S. Army veteran, and Purple Heart recipient who served 18 years. Her father's uncle was an Army Black Hawk pilot, with other members of their family serving in the United States Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, and law enforcement. She first heard about the OCS Enlistee Recognition Program from her mother. She said of the experience, "It left me feeling very proud of myself." She commented on how she has been inspired by her father's accomplishments, and what the members of her family have all gained from their service. When her father was injured, she was touched by the outpouring of support from the community. She also admires her mother's ability to adapt to change. "Even though my dad was on the other side of the world, she remained strong." She said she was a great role model for her having the responsibility of all of the children while her father underwent five deployments and multiple trainings. "One of the things I admire most about my father is his perseverance. He didn't choose an easy Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) – always being one of the first on the line, and putting everyone before himself." That is a quality she said she hopes to emulate. The family celebrates their Samoan culture. The headdress symbolizes "Daughter of the High Chief" and is used to celebrate milestones. What does her father want for her? "I want her to be the best she can be in whatever she chooses to do. I tell her – **don't forget where you come from to know where you are going.**"



OCS EDUCATOR AWARDS

High school guidance counselors and teachers are key to a military recruiter's ability to meet with high school students who may be interested in military career opportunities. To help strengthen the important relationship, OCS Awards enable recruiters to nominate local guidance counselors for the General Colin Powell Memorial Service Award, and to nominate high school teachers for the OCS STEM Award.

Award recipients are honored at OCS Ceremonies, along with family members and colleagues. OCS Awards are the only such recognition program that have a direct and long-term impact on military recruiting.



OCS GUIDEBOOK: WHY WE TAKE THE OATH: AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO OUR FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

Each and every high school senior who is honored at an OCS Ceremony receives a 96-page guidebook, specially-written for OCS new enlistees, that begins to educate them on our nation's founding principles that they have sworn a sacred oath to protect and defend...lessons that too few new enlistees were taught during their school years...





CORPORATE-HOSTED CEREMONIES

OCS embarked on a first-of-its-kind, pilot initiative with a new ceremony model to recognize older enlistees (beyond high school graduation). Honoring these enlistees becomes essential, as military recruiting expands its reach to community college students to address the declining number of high school graduates.

OCS partnered with **PayPal SERVE Veteran Employee Resource Group**, to sponsor and host a corporate OCS ceremony at its PayPal global headquarters in San Jose, California.

Sixty enlistees from the San Jose area were recognized in front of a crowd of almost 200 family members, recruiters and PayPal employees. This event was also live-streamed to other PayPal sites around the country.

75% of enlisted service members will only serve 48 months. When they exit service, they bring a high-quality and diverse set of skills to the workforce. This unique event allowed enlistees to network with veterans and employees of a multinational corporation headquartered in their hometown.

Multiple corporate-hosted OCS Ceremonies are planned for 2024 and 2025.



“The OCS Ceremony provided us with a unique opportunity to not only support a very important cause, but to also start a conversation about Paypal career opportunities with future veterans long before other corporations.”

Aaron Karczmer, Former PayPal EVP



OCS Connect is a free, online initiative designed to provide our nation's newest service members, and their parents/guardians, the advice and resources needed to navigate their military journey.

OCS Connect provides guidance on the earliest steps of the military journey, such as a basic military training and essential life skills, to assisting with early college and post-military career planning. It is imperative to begin education, career, and financial planning as soon as enlistees begin their service.



“We participate in all of the OCS Connect events, as well as watch the podcasts. They have been extremely helpful as we, and our son Patrick, navigate his initial year in the military. The parent community was especially helpful during bootcamp. I cannot recommend this resource enough for all enlistees and their families, wherever they may be in their military service journey.”

The Norris Family



In addition to self-guided learning resources, OCS Connect hosts regular group forums, held virtually and in-person, which allow families and new enlistees to share experiences and gain valuable feedback from others who have faced similar situations. The unknown of having a child or family member going into service can be overwhelming. OCS Connect creates a place of support for families to come together in a safe and honest way.





VIRTUAL THANK YOU CARD

The OCS Virtual Thank You Card serves as a public forum for individuals and local communities across the country to come together to share messages of appreciation and well wishes to our nation's newest enlistees. New enlistees and their families are able to read the messages of support when they need it the most.

As a mom of a new Marine, I understand the sacrifices that you and your family are making. Those sacrifices that you make today are the reason that we all enjoy the freedoms we have every day. I salute each and every one of you, and thank you! Be proud to serve your country even when you doubt why you're doing it, because there are so many of us who don't doubt you at all. We believe in you, support you, and love you, even if we don't actually know you! We are family now and that family will always be here for you!

Cynthia, Louisiana



To all the men and women stepping forward, stepping up to serve, thank you for accepting the challenge to serve, to grow, and to lead! You mark yourselves with distinction as those willing to serve, and if necessary, face danger to protect our country, citizens, and constitution. Absolute respect! Thank you, God Bless You! Duty First!

LTC Eric Stetson, USA Ret., Pennsylvania

At a time when so many of our own citizens do not love or respect our country, your loyalty and bravery stand out! I love knowing that there are still people out there who are willing to put their lives on the line to protect the citizens of this country. Words cannot express how grateful I and my whole family are. Your dedication and sacrifices are greatly appreciated!

Chanda, New York



VSO PARTNERSHIPS

OCS partners with various Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), such as the **Military Officers Association of America**, **The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States**, **Army Warrant Officers Association**, **the Young Marines**, and others. These partnerships are crucial for fostering a connection between experienced veterans and new enlistees, while benefiting both. By involving veteran and other military communities in OCS ceremonies and events, OCS helps to bridge the gap between all generations of service members.

The alignment of organizations that share complementary goals ensures that more young enlistees and their families receive the support they need as they embark on their military careers.



“MOAA is honored to work with OCS to recognize and celebrate our nation's newest and youngest service members. These new enlistees need to know and understand that organizations like MOAA and OCS are there to support them as they enter and navigate their military career and beyond.”

Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), MOAA President and CEO

LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIPS

United by a shared commitment to supporting servicemembers and their families, longstanding partners **Navy Federal Credit Union**, **Comcast Corporation**, and **USAA** have stood beside OCS through years of growth and transformation. These organizations are integral to the success of OCS, consistently attending Enlistee Recognition Ceremonies across the country, creating and distributing vital promotional materials, and collaborating with OCS on numerous impactful initiatives. Their dedicated involvement not only amplifies our mission, but also ensures that enlistees and their families feel valued and supported throughout their military journeys. Together, we build a stronger, more resilient community for those who serve.

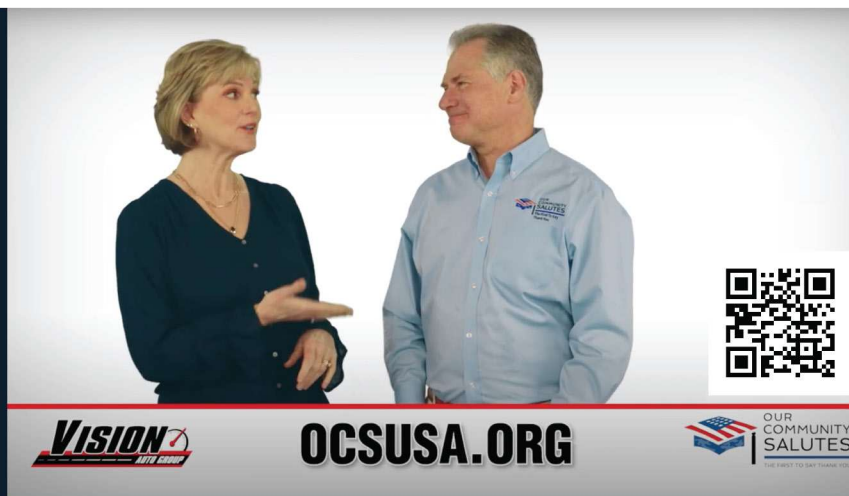


CORPORATE, COMMUNITY & FOUNDATION PARTNERS

The mission of OCS would not be possible without the numerous partners who support us throughout all we do. Some of our partners include...



COMMUNITY WIDE ACTIVATION



In 2024, Monroe County, NY set an example of total community engagement when the time came to honor their local enlistees. Three uniquely-focused organizations, **Dairy Queen**, **Vision Auto Group** and the **Rochester Red Wings Minor League Baseball Team**, joined forces to coordinate a community-wide activation leading up to the Monroe County Enlistee Recognition Ceremony. These organizations started strategic in-store fundraising campaigns, filmed advertisements, promoted OCS programs, and more, all with the goal of reconnecting American communities to our nation's military - starting with the enlistees in their backyards.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

OCS Community Leaders share a similar trait of selfless commitment to service, just as the enlistees they honor. These volunteers devote themselves to ensuring the new enlistees in their community receive the recognition and support they need as they begin their military career. OCS would not be complete, or have the nationwide mission-impact we do without each of our Community Leaders. Thank you for all that you do.

Ed Postell & Jim Eberle

OCS of Georgia (Atlanta, Columbus, Valdosta)

Christa Fica

OCS of Austin, TX

Linda Taylor & Cynthia Frith

OCS of Baton Rouge, LA

Robert Vecchio

OCS of Brookhaven, NY

Aanya Joanne Moore & Jenny Mars

OCS of Bucks County, PA

Ginny Topper & Jill Hardy

OCS of Chester County, PA

Richard Kaniss & Patti McCoy

OCS of Dallas & Fort Worth, TX

Jim Hetherington & Gary Dawson

OCS of Delaware

Bob Notch & Andy McCarty

OCS of Eastern Massachusetts

Paul Albright

OCS of El Paso, TX

Scott Edgell

OCS of Lancaster, PA

Nora Huscher & Bonnie Jean Vona

OCS of Lincoln, NE

Susan Parisen

OCS of Central Jersey

Tom Matthews

OCS of Midlands, SC

Anita Fleming

OCS of Montgomery County, PA

Kenneth Niles & Gregory d'Arbonne

OCS of New Hampshire

Lettie Bien

OCS of Charlottesville, VA

Terrie Lohmeyer

OCS of San Diego, CA

Martha Garcia & Joseph Cerciello

OCS of North Jersey

Sherm (Tank) Morrison & Tracy Morrison

OCS of Northwest, PA

Cindy McCallum & Barbara Harkness

OCS of Philadelphia, PA

Luz Arce & Elba Crespo

OCS of Puerto Rico

David Fish & Ashley Wysong

OCS of San Antonio, TX

Beresford Edwards & Linda Cills

OCS of the Virgin Islands

John Bowker

OCS of Northwest Indiana

Mark Johnson & Robert Hickey

OCS of Spotsylvania, VA

Andrea Nordquist & Kevin Tirman

OCS of Nassau County, NY

Dina "Piper" Wandler

OCS of Helena, MT

Ric Trimillos

OCS of Colorado Springs

John Gobrick

OCS of Fayetteville, NC

CH Overbay

OCS of Northwest Arkansas

Harold Tucker

OCS of Central Arkansas

Mary Regner

OCS of Lowcountry, SC

Terrie Suica-Reed

OCS of Pittsburgh, PA

Bill Krasowsky

OCS of Broome County, NY



COMMUNITY LEADERS



Robert Vecchio

OCS of Brookhaven, NY

What has been your favorite OCS memory?

“Each ceremony is magical. My favorite OCS moment came when I ran into one of the enlistees we honored about a year later at a community event. I didn’t recognize him, but he recognized me, and came up to me telling me it was one of the most memorable nights of his life, and he thanked me over and over for honoring him and his family.”

What advice do you give to the new enlistees coming through your community?

“We tell the enlistees that they will receive an overwhelming amount of information as they begin their military journey. We tell them to be confident learners, team players, and know that we are ‘cheering them on’ at home. The military will open many doors, so keep informed of educational opportunities available throughout your years of service.”



Anita Fleming

OCS of Montgomery County, PA



Jim Eberle
OCS of Georgia



Ed Postell
OCS of Georgia

What do you hope new enlistees take away from your ceremony?

Ed: “The adventure you are starting will be the greatest adventure of your life. It will enable you to succeed at all you want to do. It will not be easy, but you will create the greatest stories to tell. The military can take you anywhere - the speakers at our ceremonies, who started as enlistees, are now two-star generals, senators, preachers, the list goes on.”

Jim: “Pride in what they are committing to and knowing so, so many people appreciate what they are doing.”



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

OCS is honored to benefit from the extraordinary experience our Board of Directors provide. We thank them for their individual and collective guidance to further our mission.



LTG Joe Anderson (USA, Ret.)
OCS Board Chairman



Dr. Kenneth Hartman (USA, Vet.)
OCS Founder & President



Dr. Troy Barnes (USA, Ret.)



VADM John Bird (USN Ret.)



Dr. Wallace Boston



Jeff Cathey (USN, Ret.)



Gene Clark (USA, Ret.)



Martin Cohen, CPA



David Iwata, Esq.



CSM Michele Jones (USA, Ret.)



Julie Strauss Levin, Esq.



Karen Lowe



COL Brooks Tucker (USMC, Ret.)



Jesse Vitagliano (USMC, Ret.)



Hon. Robert Wilkie (USAF, Ret.)

THE FUTURE

As we conclude this annual report, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the extraordinary accomplishments and unwavering dedication of our entire OCS community. This year has been a testament to what we can achieve when we unite with a shared purpose - to honor and support those who have made the decision to serve our nation in uniform. The growth in our programs, the expansion of our partnerships, and the heartfelt stories of impact all underscore the vital role that OCS plays in reconnecting American communities with our military.

To our donors, volunteers, corporate partners, and community leaders, thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission. Your contributions have been instrumental in enabling OCS to reach new heights and touch the lives of thousands of enlistees and their families. It is your commitment that allows us to stand beside these young men and women as they embark on their military journey, ensuring they are recognized, celebrated, and supported every step of the way.

As we look forward to the future, I am confident that OCS will continue to grow and evolve, driven by the same passion and dedication that has brought us this far. Together, we will keep working to bridge the gap between our military and the communities they serve, creating lasting connections that strengthen our nation.

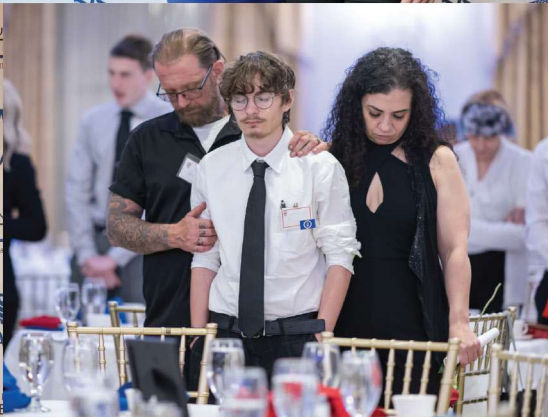
With deep appreciation and optimism for the road ahead,

Dr. Kenneth E. Hartman

Dr. Kenneth E. Hartman (USA, Ret.)
Founder & President, Our Community Salutes - USA

Dear Mr. Hartman,

I wanted to say thank you for everything you have done and continue to do for the community & new enlistees. Your work with OCS has inspired me tremendously to do great things with my career and I am so very grateful that I was able to be a part of this event. OCS has made me want to become the best version of myself and give my all in everything I choose to endeavor in and I appreciate it greatly.





OUR
COMMUNITY
SALUTES®

THE FIRST TO SAY THANK YOU

Our Community Salutes

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