



UNITED THROUGH READING

MISSION: United Through Reading strengthens military families' literacy, emotional bonds, and well-being through the power of reading together at every age, no matter the distance.

United Through Reading was born in 1989 from a simple yet powerful belief: every child deserves to hear the comforting voice of their loved one, even when separated by military service. What began as a grassroots effort with a few recordings has now grown into a global movement. Today, United Through Reading supports thousands of active duty service members, Veterans, Guards, Reservists, and retirees worldwide. Whether stationed in remote locations or preparing for deployment, participants read books aloud, recording videos that their children can watch anytime—creating cherished moments that sustain families through every challenge.

2024 IMPACT

- 405,836 Military Family Members Served
- 87,401 Books Distributed
- 4,095 Storytime Recordings Made
- 19,946 Literacy Resources Shared
- 1,178 Events

OUR PROGRAMS

- Free App available to record, save, and share video recorded storytime
- Free books with every recording
- Free literacy resources to support military families
- Two Mobile Story Stations that travel and support military communities



"I was blown away by this unique method to be able to remain grounded and connected to my boys while on deployment."

- Chief Warrant Officer Sean Campbell, US Coast Guard



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About United Through Reading

United Through Reading keeps military families reading-ready, no matter the distance between them. Families stay connected through the storytime video recordings and books we send. These stories ease the stress of time apart due to military duty, maintain positive emotional connections, and cultivate a love of reading and early childhood literacy. Service members and veterans can record a story for their family at more than 300 recording locations worldwide and on their mobile devices with our free and secure reading App. Over the past 35 years, more than 3.8 million military family members have benefited from United Through Reading's programs.

Why United Through Reading?

There are more than 1.6 million military children in the United States, with 70% below the age of eleven. Because service members change duty stations approximately every two to three years, the average military child moves six to nine times during their K-12 education (IVMF 2021 Military Child Brief). Military children face challenges and life uncertainties that other children do not, such as frequent moves and regular family separations due to training and deployment.

The stress associated with military family separations, repeated deployments, and frequent relocations has been linked to lower achievement in reading and math, as well as academic disruptions. Irregular work schedules for many military families interrupt everyday family routines and cause breakdowns in communication (RAND Corp. 2009 & 2011, Defense Health Agency 2015). The 2022 Military Family Lifestyle Survey reported time apart and the impact of deployment on the family as two of the top five concerns for military families.

United Through Reading creates storytime moments for military families, enhancing connection, maintaining critical bedtime story routines, and fostering a love of reading that can lessen the stress of time apart for military children.

Why Not Video Chat?

We encourage families to video chat whenever possible, but many factors make this difficult to utilize as the only way to stay connected. Factors that limit access to FaceTime, Skype, or social media include operational security, access to the internet, and vastly different time zones. Children often want to connect with their service member or veteran immediately, and with the on-demand nature of United Through Reading, they can have storytime anytime. Reading aloud with children of all ages encourages family connections and strengthens bonds while also promoting literacy. United Through Reading storytime recordings allow the service member to include personal messages and for the children to see and hear their loved one while enjoying a book at the same time. Families can access these recordings at any time of the day, which helps maintain established reading routines or helps start a new one!





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How Does United Through Reading Support Learning?

United Through Reading enhances military children's educational development by providing new, high-quality children's books to military households and digitally capturing service members reading stories for their children to view when they can't be together for storytime.

Recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the "Nation's Report Card," indicates that average reading scores for 13-year-olds declined by four points in 2023 compared to the 2019–2020 school year, marking the lowest levels in decades. Additionally, a study from [The Ohio State University](#) found that young children whose parents read to them five books a day enter kindergarten having heard approximately 1.4 million more words than children who were never read to. Even reading one book a day exposes children to about 290,000 more words by age five compared to those who aren't read to regularly. This increased exposure likely facilitates vocabulary expansion and enhances comprehension skills, aiding in understanding diverse texts as children progress in school and beyond.

United Through Reading facilitates family connection through a shared storytime experience. Children who can hear a story from their service members are provided the opportunity to feel a sense of comfort and normalcy that is critical to their ability to process periods of time apart.

Family readiness is a military family's ability to use physical, psychological, social, and spiritual resources to prepare for, adapt to, and grow from military lifestyle demands. By helping family members feel more secure and connected in daily life, families can build their capacity to adapt to the stressors and changes associated with military life. This helps keep relationships strong and can help protect the psychological health of children struggling with change, fears, or missing a parent. Also, the more adaptable military families are, the better they can support their service members (Health.mil, Boosting Family Readiness).

What Books Does United Through Reading Provide?

United Through Reading's book list includes over 400 titles, from board books to chapter books. Books are selected using recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, our partner organizations, and other high-profile associations in the education field. The books we select have positive messaging that reflects our organization's ethos, reflect the diversity of the military community, and are books that we know service members will want to read. The engaging, compelling, and fun stories resonate with military children.

Diverse children's books reflect our military families and our nation. United Through Reading has prioritized including them in our library so parents can choose the best book for their family. Books, especially for children, can be mirrors reflecting aspects of their identity, like race, culture, gender, and experience. But they can also be windows into other people's experiences that help children understand the world around them. Books transport us offering diverse books, we help children enter other worlds and develop greater empathy for others.

For children to thrive in a diverse world, they need access to a wide array of books that both reflect themselves and allow them to immerse themselves in others' experiences. Our military is an institution celebrated for its diversity, and its diversity is its strength. At United Through Reading, we celebrate all of our military families every day through our diverse book collection.

