

# STRONGER FAMILIES

## OXYGEN OUTLOOK

Connecting You with the Families You Serve

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AS SPECIAL OPERATORS SHOULD THE BULK OF THE WAR, YOU CAN HELP STRENGTHEN THEIR FAMILIES

# Equipping Our Military Leaders to Better Support Special Operations Families

Special Operations leaders from across the nation travelled to Fort Bragg, NC, for a three day training event to learn how to deliver the *Oxygen* program to their units and improve their speaking skills.



Above: Local leaders and Chaplains at the Three-Day Intensive Oxygen course. Below: Trainees practice a communications "break-out" session.



FT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA— Our Special Forces are under extreme stress due to the current operational tempo of the War on Terror and our continuing fight against ISIS. Military chaplains bear the emotional well-being and relational health of our service men and women, both in and out of combat. These chaplains actively seek out programs that they believe will best serve the issues they encounter and need to address the most with their units.

### Advancing to the Next Level

Most military chaplains and Family Readiness Group leaders working with Army Special Forces are familiar with the *Oxygen for Your Relationships* program—either through personal attendance or Facilitator training, which empowers them to teach *Oxygen* via DVDs rather than live instruction. After experiencing increased demand for the program and positive results within their units, many facilitators

began requesting additional training to teach the live program.

So, with special approval from the USASOC Family Programs Director, Stronger Families sent their national training team to do just

**“Stronger Families addresses the many relationship issues facing military families. *Oxygen* is concise, high energy, and truly a world class program.”**

—David C., USASOC Chaplain

that. Over the course of three days, an intensive training class was provided specifically for Special Forces chaplains and leaders. Not only did they receive *Oxygen* curriculum instruction, but professional speaker training from an award winning, world class coach as well.

The reviews that came in shortly after the event were exceptional. In

*continued on back...*

# Your Help for Military Blended Families

Twenty five couples stationed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio were treated to a very special weekend of *Oxygen for Your Relationships* and much-needed family time at the Great Wolf Lodge.



Greg and Kim with their children, Paxton and Lily.

AUGUST 2016—U.S. Air Force couple Greg and Kim (*last name withheld*), along with their children Paxton and Lily, received a special surprise: the upcoming *Oxygen for Your Relationships* seminar for military couples stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB was to be held at the Great Wolf Lodge in Mason, Ohio. It was going to be a great weekend for the whole family. They would have an opportunity to spend time together as a family and interact with other military families in their community on a more fun and personal level.

## Adjusting to New Life Together

The couple, who are a blended family, are one of a growing population within the military. Blending

two families can be a joyful experience and, at the same time, a great challenge. A blended military family not only experiences new roles, new schedules, new ways of doing things and compromise, they also face issues unique to the military—deployment, frequent relocations, school changes for children, and career changes for spouses.

## Equipped for Victory

Greg and Kim had been to other marriage education classes, but they both felt like *Oxygen* was something their marriage really needed at the time. “More than just the fun part of the weekend, we were really looking forward to an opportunity to gain some tools for strengthening our marriage,” Greg shared. “In any marriage, there are different seasons. We’ve recently just come out of a hard season, so this has been perfect timing for us. We’ve been able to regroup and refocus and now we have these tools to help make us stronger.”

“Marriage is hard work, and you need to be prepared and equipped, whether you are a blended family, newly married, or married for a long time.”

—Kim, U.S. Air Force spouse

Kim added, “The retreat also gave us an opportunity to spend some time together and walk away from this weekend feeling enriched in our relationship. We feel good that when we hit the next hard season, we can come out of it faster and stronger.”

When asked what they felt they had gained from attending *Oxygen*,

Greg was quick to respond. “I was very pleased to see how interactive the seminar was and how relevant the material was in helping couples in areas that might be difficult with marriage, particularly conflict resolution and communication. I also think the *Oxygen* materials are easy to understand, very applicable, and a lot of fun.”

Kim was grateful that many of the issues that blended families face were also covered. “I think the process of blending a family can be difficult without the right tools and the right guidance. It can easily get messy.”

Greg agreed. “Marriage is hard work, and you need to be prepared and equipped, whether you are a blended family, newly married, or married for a long time. I think that *Oxygen* really hit the core issues that will give couples the tools and skills to lay a healthy foundation for a good marriage and family.”

## Encouraging Others

The couple ended with this advice: “If anyone is thinking about attending an *Oxygen* seminar, but hesitant to go, just do it! You can only gain from this experience. It will give you a great opportunity to really broaden your horizons, your understanding of your spouse, and what it really means to build a healthy marriage together.” ■

Visit [StrongerFamilies.org](http://StrongerFamilies.org)  
for more!

STRONGER FAMILIES  
Helps You Live Relationships

YOU ARE MAKING SUCH A DIFFERENCE FOR FAMILIES SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

# Stronger Families Travels to Puerto Rico

In our continuing effort to serve the families of the United States Coast Guard, Stronger Families was invited to bring *Oxygen for Your Relationships* to personnel stationed at USCG Air Station Borinquen.

U.S. COAST GUARD AIR STATION BORINQUEN—Located in the far northwest corner of Puerto Rico, the primary missions of the men and women stationed here are search and rescue and law enforcement. While the northwest coast is a beautiful part of the island, our Coastguardsmen and their families face unusual challenges. As a small, remote base, it does not have many of the services most U.S. military bases have. Things like English language medical care and support services that are often taken for granted in the U.S. are simply not available.

## A Grassroots Effort

There are few resources like marriage counseling available in Puerto Rico, and those that are available are in Spanish. An English language program was something the community had been asking for over a year. In September, Stronger Families, in partnership with the USO and CH Nathan Rice, brought the *Oxygen* program to families stationed in this remote base.

Thanks to the support of the USO, the local Food Service Chief Petty Officer prepared an excellent break-



U.S. Coast Guard couples come together for a photo at the end of the seminar.

fast and lunch for the two-day event. Couples were able to focus on enjoying their days together and learning new relationship skills.

## Worth the Wait

Afterward, a helicopter pilot wrote, "When we first got married, my wife and I promised each other we would do something like this every year. Well, eight years later we finally made it happen! It was great to dedicate two whole days to our relationship, and we left the retreat with a feeling of renewal and excitement."

Another attendee shared, "After 16 years of marriage, the seminar really helped us understand how we operate and why we both get frustrated with each other at times. We learned tools and were given an opportunity to talk about how to communicate better using our own specific characteristics."

Thanks to your support of Stronger Families, couples serving our country in Puerto Rico received a much-needed gift of *Oxygen* for their relationships! ■

STRONGER FAMILIES

18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
DINNER & AUCTION

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

*Leigh Anne Tucky*

Inspiration for *The Blind Side*



*Friday, November 18, 2016*

THE WESTIN HOTEL | BELLEVUE

*Come and celebrate the impact you are having on military and veteran families. Support those who have given so much for us!*

General Reception and Raffle 6:00pm  
Dinner, Auction, and Program 7:00pm

Individual Tickets: \$150 | Table of Ten: \$1,500

*Space is limited.*

To purchase tickets or for more information, please visit [strongerfamilies.org](http://strongerfamilies.org).



Oxygen Leaders Training graduates from U.S. Special Forces.

## Equipping Military Leaders *...continued*

In addition to the chaplains, Family Program staff and SHARP (Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention) advocates felt better equipped to deliver the *Oxygen* program. Some of the facilitators also shared that they felt revitalized and renewed in their delivery style and better prepared to weave their personal stories and past experiences into the *Oxygen* curriculum.

Even though the training was just a few weeks ago, Stronger Families has already received several requests by this newly trained group to bring *Oxygen* to military families in their units. They are anxious to put their new training and presentation skills to use to assist the men and women they serve. We are so grateful for their enthusiasm and desire to get started. ■

“What I really like about the *Oxygen* program is the ability to invest in couples’ marriages, not just in crisis situations and counseling, but preventing the crisis. My expectations were exceeded and I am grateful to be a part of this valuable program.”

—Cory R., USASOC Chaplain

<b>AMERICA'S MILITARY</b>	LESS THAN <b>2%</b> <b>VOLUNTEER</b> TO PROTECT OUR <b>FREEDOM</b> AND SAFETY	<b>20</b> <b>VETERANS</b> <b>COMMIT</b> <b>SUICIDE</b> <b>EVERY DAY</b>
<b>50%</b> OF THE <b>2.5 MILLION</b> WHO FOUGHT SINCE 9/11 <b>HAVE PTSD, TBI, OR PHYSICAL WOUNDS</b>		
<b>OVER 1/2</b> OF THE 1.3 MILLION IN THE MILITARY ARE <b>MARRIED</b>	<b>1 IN 8</b> <b>MILITARY</b> <b>MARRIAGES</b> <b>END IN</b> <b>DIVORCE</b>	
<b>25%</b> <b>IN THE MILITARY</b> <b>DIVORCE RATE</b> <b>OVER THE LAST DECADE</b>		

## Your Support Makes a BIG Difference!

Some of these statistics are alarming, but there is hope! By supporting Stronger Families, you are giving military families the tools and support they need to build a strong and healthy family. In addition to your generous donations, here are a few other ways you can make a big difference every day!

- 1 THANK A MILITARY FAMILY** for their service and sacrifice to ensure our country's safety and freedom.
- 2 VOLUNTEER.** View opportunities at [strongerfamilies.org/volunteers](http://strongerfamilies.org/volunteers).
- 3 START YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN.** Run a 5K, or organize a school or neighborhood challenge. Visit [strongerfamilies.causevox.com/signup](http://strongerfamilies.causevox.com/signup) to learn more.
- 4 JOIN ONE OF OUR "GIVE-BACK" PROGRAMS.**
  - **Smile.amazon.com.** The AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible purchases to Stronger Families.
  - **Fred Meyer Rewards.** Link your rewards card to Stronger Families. Our nonprofit organization number is 84545.

**90%**  
of the funds we raise go directly to *Oxygen* programs and services.