



OHIO 2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT



Supporting Military Families

THE 2025-2026 STATE OF OHIO
MIC3 ANNUAL REPORT
OHIO MIC3 COMMISSIONER
PETE LUPIBA



During the 2025-2026 academic year, the Thomas D. Rutan MIC3 State Council of Ohio continued its collaborative EDU-MIL mission to reduce or eliminate any obstacles that impede the educational success of Military Children in the Buckeye state. The Purple Star School initiative is the Ohio MIC3's solution to further support their 36,000 military-connected students. The Purple Star program started in Ohio and has been adopted in 47 states. It began in Ohio in 2017 with 8 schools that shared a common goal of easing the transition of PreK-12 military-connected students and has grown to over 800 schools. The Purple Star Initiative strives to bring awareness of the Compact to the many schools outside the reach of military installations and the direct support provided by School Liaison Program Managers.

It is a joint effort between the Council and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW), that administers the Purple Star Program, that continues to look for ways to improve communication with the military-connected community. The goal is to keep the military-connected community informed about beneficial programs and happenings in the state. As a result, the monthly ODEW Military-Connected Youth Bulletin, that is distributed to Purple Star Liaisons, is now accessible by the general public.

04/17/2026



Military-Connected Youth April Bulletin

Dear Military Family Liaisons,

This April, Ohio joins schools across the state and nation in celebrating the Month of the Military Child. Military-connected students are born into military life and face challenges and enjoy triumphs as they grow up.

Schools can honor military-connected students by participating in the United Service Organization's [Military Kids Creative Showcase](#) and the Ohio Council of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission's [Military Family Spirit Week](#) through April 17. Please share pictures of your spirit week using #PurpleUpOhio.

The [Military Child Education Coalition](#) and the [Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission](#) offer additional resources.

Purple Star Class of 2026

2026 Purple Star award recipients will be announced later this month; a specific date has yet to be determined. The Department will send award notifications via email to the superintendent, principal, and military family liaison.

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The Ohio MIC3 conducted its three State Council Meetings at Purple Star locations throughout the state: August 4, 2025, at Purple Star recipient Warren County Career Center (southwestern OH) hosting 14 council members, December 1, 2025, at Purple Star recipient Olentangy Berlin High School (central OH) hosting 17 council members, and March 13, 2026, at Purple Star recipient Arts Impact Middle School, Columbus City Schools (central OH) hosting 16 council members. A major strength of the Ohio MIC3 is its diverse range of stakeholders united in the mission of easing the transition of Ohio's military-connected students and their families.



At the March meeting, Diane McGuire from the Kids Mental Health Foundation (KMHF), a national organization based out of Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, shared resources for educators supporting military-connected students. Commissioner LuPiba, Council Members Twedt, Durell, Davis, Young, Shaughnessy, and Scragg, as well as Mason Farr (National Veterans Memorial and Museum), and Purple Star Liaisons Brittany Edwards (Vandalia Butler City Schools), Josh Baker (Beavercreek City Schools), Mychelle Dukes (Liberty-Benton Schools), John Witt (Dublin City Schools), and Monica Myers (Jackson Local Schools) worked in partnership with the KMHF to develop the materials that became part of a national toolbox to support military-connected students. This initiative began in 2025 and came to fruition in March, 2026 with the release of KMHF Resources for Parents & Caregivers on their website which includes a tab for Military-Connected Children.

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Supporting Military Families

In August, Council Member Jenn Davis partnered with the local Huber Heights Veterans Commission, City of Huber Heights, and other local supporters to dedicate the Wayne High School Military Service Wall of Honor for alumni who served in the armed forces. In Ohio, Military Walls of Honor are becoming the standard. On September 25 Liberty-Benton S.O.S (Serving Our Soldiers) Club dedicated their Military Honor Wall at their Football Military Appreciation Night. On May 16 Vandalia Butler High school unveiled their Wall of Honor as part of their Memorial Day Program. In addition Jackson Local Schools and Bellbrook High School have also incorporated a Wall of Honor in each of their High Schools.



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MIC3 ANNUAL REPORT
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On September 5th commissioner LuPiba and Council Member Lewis traveled to Licking Heights Local Schools (Central OH) to honor Everest and Broad Peak Elementaries for earning the Purple Star award. The next day they visited Seneca East High School in Attica (northwestern OH) to attend Stars, Stripes, & Lights, a military recognition event that takes place during an 80 Team Cross Country Invitational Meet. They presented superintendent David Danhoff with the MIC3 Challenge Coin. At the end of the month their travels continued to 2 Purple Star elementary schools, French Run and Summit Road in Reynoldsburg City Schools (central OH) where they presented the schools with the Ohio MIC3 Challenge Coin.

At the beginning of October Council Members Durell and Lewis presented the 2025 Janet Wynn Memorial Award to Abby and Chase Johnson at the Military Appreciation Night football game. The Janet Wynn Memorial Award (JWMA) honors an Ohio military family or school-aged youth that has demonstrated exceptional perseverance, grit, and determination. In its sixth year, this award honors the memory of WPAFB School Liaison Janet Wynn who passed away in April 2020, after a fierce battle with cancer. The JWMA committee is comprised of Council Members Durell, Twedt, Wyen and Lewis, friends and colleagues of Ohio MIC3 Council Member Janet Wynn. Navy veteran Dr. Cliff Moore of Lewis Center provides a plaque for the honor.



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MIC3 ANNUAL REPORT
OHIO MIC3 COMMISSIONER
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Supporting Military Families

The Annual Business Meeting of the MIC3 took place in October in Indianapolis at NCAA headquarters. The Ohio delegation included Commissioner LuPiba, Purple Star Liaison (PSL) Brittany Edwards (Vandalia-Butler Schools) and Council Members Twedt, Scragg, Davis, and Lewis. All attendees were very moved by the Bloom Teens presentation.

On October 28, 2025, Ohio in collaboration with Virginia, Alaska, South Carolina and Kentucky hosted the 4th Annual Purple Star USA: National Convening of Schools and Communities. This is a virtual event held near the Day of the Deployed that provides Purple Star School liaisons, parents, students, and other state entities the opportunity to collaborate and share best practices to better support military-connected youth and families.

PREK-12 MIL MISSION

**SAVE THE DATE! 4TH ANNUAL
PURPLE STAR USA: NATIONAL
CONVENING OF SCHOOLS AND
COMMUNITIES**

*Connecting and empowering parents, schools, and communities to
build resiliency for military-connected youth!*

Join the fourth national convening of Purple Star youth, families,
teachers, counselors, state agencies, and friends.
Hosted by your Local Purple Star School Educators & Leaders!

#PurpleStarUSA

Tuesday, 28 October 2025
10:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m. EST

Contact: Jenn at jenniferN.davis@myhbc.org
or Steve at Steve.Cambron@ky.gov

The logo for Appalachian University (AU) features the letters "AU" in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a white outline. To the left of the letters is a stylized white eagle head facing right.

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November is Military Family Month as declared by Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jim Tressell. To honor these families, the Council sponsored the first annual Ohio Veterans and Military Family Spirit Week. Once again, the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) shared recognition materials with schools in order to honor military-connected school staff. In addition, Commissioner LuPiba was a guest on OSBA's Leading the Way Podcast where he shared how Purple Star Schools support and empower families and educators. Ohio Department of Veterans Services also included Purple Star Schools in the ODVS Toolkit. This aims to provide additional resources for educators when working with veteran connected families.



In December, Commissioner LuPiba and Council Member Lewis visited Purple Star Jonathan Alder High School (PSL Rick Kitchen). This was an opportunity for the military-connected students to share their ideas for the Purple Star Program at their school.

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On January 23, Council Members Scherer and Lewis attended a celebration of a service project collaboration between Columbus Public Libraries, the Kids Mental Health Foundation (Whitney Raglin Bignall), and the National Veterans Memorial and Museum (Mason Farr), and COSI (Steven White). The Service in Action Nook initiative aims to foster community engagement and literacy through storytelling and service. The nook rotates to different library locations with projects such as writing cards to military-connected students or making bookmarks for veterans.



In February, Commissioner LuPiba and Council Member Lewis met with Air Force ROTC students from the Arnold Air Squadron at The Ohio State University to support their desire to volunteer within the military-connected community in Central Ohio. Students were directed to Honor Flight Columbus and possibly supporting the Purple Star Student Summit. One of the students, Owen Swonger, was a graduate of Ohio Purple Star Rossford High School where he participated in their Serving Our Soldiers (SOS) program.

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The month of March began with the 9th annual Military Signing Day at the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. Commissioner LuPiba and Council Member Scragg directed the event that honored 87 students from all over the state who were committing to service at one of the Military Academies, university ROTC programs, or enlisting to serve Active Duty or in the National Guard. Commissioner LuPiba presented the Ohio MIC3 State Coin to two sisters who are part of the Hamilton Elementary School Purple Star Little Hero's Group. Washington Elementary School (Hilliard Schools) was chosen to say the Pledge of Allegiance for the event. They are also a Purple Star School.



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The next day began a period of profound sadness for the Buckeye State due to the loss of three Ohio Air National Guard Airmen in a refueling crash in Iran. Captain Seth R. Koval, Captain Curtis J. Angst, and Master Sergeant Tyler H. Simmons gave their all to our nation. On March 19 Council Members Scragg and Lewis attended a memorial at Amanda-Clearcreek High. Commissioner LuPiba and Council Members Puff, Battistone, and Lewis attended a wreath-laying ceremony for the three Airmen hosted by the Daughters of the American Revolution at Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center.



On March 21st Commissioner LuPiba and Council Members Wyen and Davis attended the Blue Star Families of Dayton and Southwest Ohio 6th Anniversary Awards Dinner. At this dinner Mad River Middle School Principal Mrs. Gleason was presented with the Ohio MIC3 State Coin for her dedication to serving military-connected students and families.



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MIC3 ANNUAL REPORT
OHIO MIC3 COMMISSIONER
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At the end of March, in preparation for April, Month of the Military Child (MOTMC), Commissioner LuPiba and Council Member Lewis visited three Olentangy Schools: Berlin High School (PSL Vicki Howell), Berlin Middle School (PSL Christina Williams), and Shale Meadows Elementary School (PSL Ashley Pederson), on Friday, March 27. Council Member Durell hosted this event in his district.

April is MOTMC, Council Members and Senators Johnson and Weinstein supported proclamations and resolutions on the part of Governor DeWine and the Senate that April was MOTMC and would be honored throughout the state.



The Ohio MIC3 celebrated the annual Ohio Military Family Spirit Week. Council Member Young began Spirit Week in 2020 as a way of uniting students, families, and staff who were separated during the pandemic. It was shared with the Council and has become a tradition that also celebrates National Purple Up! Day on April 15.

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SPirit WEEK '26

OHIO MILITARY FAMILY SPIRIT WEEK

Join our virtual Ohio military family spirit week April 13-17 and share your spirit on your social media platforms using #PurpleUpOhio
April 13-17, 2026

- April 13: Red, White, and Blue Day
- April 14: Support Your Favorite Military Branch Day
- April 15: State-wide Purple Up! Day 2026
- April 16: Camouflage a.k.a. "Dig" (Digital) Day
- April 17: R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) Friday wear Red!

Contact: Ashley Treadwell, Ohio MIC3 Council | treada@star.cincinatti.k12.oh.us
Christine Young, Purple Star School Liaison, Anthony Wayne Schools | cyoung@anthonywayneschools.org

Our beloved Ohio has more than 700 Purple Star Schools directly Supporting America's Brave Men & Kids!



ODEW announced the new round of Purple Star School awardees, this year there were 153 first time awardees and 151 renewals bringing the total of Purple Star Schools in the Buckeye State to over 800.

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MIC3 ANNUAL REPORT
OHIO MIC3 COMMISSIONER
PETE LUPIBA



Supporting Military Families



MOTMC celebrations continued with the Purple Star Tour organized by Council Members Smith and Edmonds, School Liaison Program Managers at Wright Patterson Air Force Base. Commissioner LuPiba and Council Member Lewis visited 6 Purple Star Schools near the base.



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MIC3 ANNUAL REPORT
OHIO MIC3 COMMISSIONER
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Supporting Military Families

To conclude Month of the Military Child, Council Members Smith and Edmonds with the FSS and Child and Youth Programs at Wright Patterson Air Force Base hosted Kids Fest 2026! Commissioner LuPiba, and Council Members Davis, Edmonds, Scragg, and Smith provided information and resources to the families of WPAFB.



May is National Military Appreciation Month and Council Member Puff continued her visits to Ohio Hero Families as Governor Mike DeWine's Executive Director for Veterans & Military Families. On May 13, Mrs. Fran DeWine, the First Lady of Ohio, was hosted by Council Member Davis at Studebaker Preschool in Huber Heights near Wright Patterson Air Force Base. Mrs. DeWine visited with students and true to her push for early literacy integration in Ohio, read The Very Hungry Caterpillar to the children. Council Members Edmonds and Puff were in attendance as well.



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Supporting Military Families

On May 21st, Commissioner LuPiba and Council Members Puff and Davis attended the Governor's Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Ohio Statehouse Veterans Plaza. This ceremony is to honor the Gold Star Families in Ohio. Students from Olentangy Liberty Middle School Choir performed a selection of patriotic and commemorative songs. Olentangy Liberty Middle School is a Purple Star School.



In June, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Council Member Shank recognized 10 universities/colleges that earned the Collegiate Purple Star, bringing the total to 51. Similar to the PreK-12 program in Ohio, these Collegiate Purple Star institutions are committed to supporting military-connected students.

COLLEGIATE PURPLE STAR AWARD
HONORING MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS

Ohio Department of Higher Education

COLLEGIATE PURPLE STAR
All Awardees

1. Antioch University
2. Ashland University
3. Baldwin Wallace University
4. Belmont College
5. Bowling Green State University
6. Central Ohio Technical College
7. Cincinnati State Technical and Community College
8. Clark State College
9. Cleveland State University
10. Cleveland State Community College
11. Coshocton County Community College
12. Delaware College
13. Edgemoor State Community College
14. Franklin University
15. Hocking College
16. John Carroll University
17. Kent State University
18. Lakeland Community College
19. Licking County Community College
20. Marietta College
21. Marietta Technical College
22. Miami University
23. Miami St. Joseph University
24. NIEMCO
25. North Central State College
26. Northwood State Community College
27. Ohio American University
28. Ohio Northern University
29. Ohio State University
30. The Ohio State University
31. Owens Community College
32. Reeves State College
33. Shaker State University
34. Sinclair Community College
35. Southern State Community College
36. Stark State College
37. Tiffin State Community College
38. The University of Akron
39. Udo University
40. University of Cincinnati
41. University of Findlay
42. University of Dayton
43. University of Northeast Ohio
44. University of Toledo
45. Walsh University
46. Washington State College of Ohio
47. Western Governors University
48. Wright State University
49. Zane State University
50. Zane State College

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A great deal of planning by MIC3 Council Members and Purple Star Liaisons from across the state resulted in the 4th annual Purple Star Summit on June 29. It was hosted by Council Member Kessler at Collegiate Purple Star Ashland University Columbus Center. Purple Star Liaisons, local/state military members, and other government agency members attended.

Save The Date
In-Person!

'26 Ohio Purple Star Schools Summit

Monday, June 29th
8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Ashland University / Columbus Branch Campus
8050 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43235

Registration and information set for state-wide distribution on April 29th

Powered by the State of Ohio, Ohio Army and Air National Guard Youth Programs, and T. D. Rutan MIC3 (Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission) State Council of Ohio

We welcome Purple Star School educators & leaders, and those seeking to become Purple Star Schools!

Purple Star Schools and the Collegiate Purple Star are programs developed by the Ohio MIC3 Tom Rutan Council to support PreK-12 and collegiate military-connected students and their families. The State Council continues to look for innovative ways to support military-connected students and families. In March of 2027, the Ohio MIC3 will be hosting its first annual Purple Star Student Leadership Summit at the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. A committee of Purple Star Liaisons, students and Council Members are being led by Mychelle Dukes, Purple Star Liaison from Liberty-Benton Schools to plan this event. In other news, the Buckeye State continues to lead as Kent City Schools (northeastern OH) now include leave for their military-connected staff as part of their contract and the Council hopes to see more considerations given to these military-connected families.



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Members of the Thomas D. Rutan Military Interstate Children's Compact State Council:

36,000 Military-connected Students across the Buckeye State

Pete LuPiba, (U.S. Navy veteran), Council Chair

Thomas D. "Tom" Rutan, Commissioner Emeritus (51 Years serving in Public Education)

Ashley Twedt, Chief Administrator of Ohio MIC3 Site & State Vice-Chair of Rutan Council

Dr. Michelle Lewis, State Historian of Rutan Council, Retired Educator

Jason Scragg, (U.S. Marine Corps Veteran), Department of Education and Workforce, Purple Star Schools, & State Secretary of Rutan Council

Director Tammy Puff, (U.S. Army Veteran), The Hon. Mike DeWine – Office of the Governor

Captain Jason D. Durell, U.S. Army Medical Brigade Command Columbus, Olentangy Schools

Chris Picha, (U.S. Army Veteran), Department of Veterans Services

Kristin Ronai, Ohio High School Athletic Association

Shari Obrenski, Ohio Federation of Teachers

Shatila Smith, School Liaison Program Manager, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and State of Ohio

Andrea Edmonds, School Liaison Program Manager, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and State of Ohio

Colonel Marietta Sanders, Commanding Officer 88th Mission Support Group, Wright Patterson Air Force Base

Mark Scherer, Ohio National Guard Youth Program

Andrew Seward, Ohio National Guard Youth Program

Dr. Becky Hornberger, Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators

Dr. Tim Freeman, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators

Dr. Tom Perkins, Buckeye Association of School Administrators

Senator Terry Johnson, Ohio Senate

Senator Casey Weinstein, Ohio Senate

Representative Desiree Tims, Ohio House of Representatives

Representative Michael Dovilla, Ohio House of Representatives

Darren Miller, Ohio School Counselor Association (Crestview Local)

Tom Hosler, Ohio School Boards Association

Chad Wyen, Highly Impacted District Superintendent – Mad River Local

Jenn Davis, Association of Purple Star Schools (Studebaker Preschool Teacher)

Jared Shank (U.S. Army Veteran), Department of Higher Education

Patrick Shaughnessy, Counselor, Medina Country Career Center

Josh Battistone, Assistant Principal, Arts Impact Middle School, Columbus City Schools

Nori Jackson, Education Support Services for the U.S. Marine Corps 4th District

Austin Corder, U.S. Army Columbus Battalion Education Support Services

Amber Houck, Family Program Manager, Defense Supply Center Columbus

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Authored and Edited by Rutan MIC3 Council Members Jenn Davis, Dr. Michelle Lewis, and
Commissioner Pete LuPiba.