

**American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.  
Tampa Bay**

**AGSM, Inc. is a 501(c) 3 national, nonprofit Veterans' Service Organization (VSO) founded in Washington, DC in 1928, incorporated and chartered by the US Congress.**

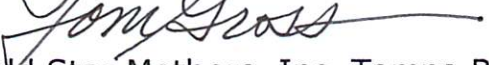
**We are Mothers whose children died while in Military service, or died as a result of that service, or are missing in action.**

- We serve Veterans and their families
- We aid Wounded Warriors and Active Duty Military and their families
- We honor the memory of the Fallen
- We promote patriotism and respect for our nation
- We serve our country, state, and community through volunteering
- We extend emotional, peer, and resource support to all Gold Star Mothers and their families

Approximately 200 chapters make up the nationwide organization. There are 3 active chapters in the state of Florida; the TB chapter is the largest. The Tampa Bay Chapter was founded and chartered in 1963. Currently, there are 50 members in this chapter.

As a **VSO, Tampa Bay AGSMs** volunteer at the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at James A. Haley VA Hospital, Tampa, Florida, at the Fisher House, also located on the campus of J.A. Haley and are VAVs representatives as well. In addition, we volunteer at the USO at Tampa International Airport and the USO Day Room at James A. Haley VA Hospital. We are members of Hillsborough County Veterans' Council, local VFWs and American Legion units. These are only a few of the many Veterans' organizations that AGSM, Inc. TB serves and support. Additionally, AGSMs partners with Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco county JROTC programs, we also make presentations at local colleges and high schools. We work closely with the Blue Star Mothers because at one time, we also were a Blue Star family. We co-produced an educational and patriotic 4 minute long dvd, **the Symbols of Service and Sacrifice** when we realized that most Americans people do not know who or what is a Blue Star, a Gold Star, and a Silver Star family.

AGSMs are involved at our churches and in our communities carrying on the legacy and memory of our fallen sons and daughters. Our motto is, "We honor through service":

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## **American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. – Finding Strength in Service**

Written By: Lindsay Crawford

On June 4, 1928, a group of twenty-five mothers, met in Washington, DC to establish a national organization that became known as American Gold Star Mothers (AGSM), Inc. The group is named after the Service Flags families display to indicate a member serving in the Armed Forces. A blue star on the flag represents each member of the immediate family who serves, and a gold star is placed over the blue star if a family member is killed. Determined to offer support to every mother who loses a child in military conflict, American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. is nondenominational, non-profitable, and nonpolitical. Their mission is to provide comfort to each other, and to honor their children through service to veterans, active duty military and their families, and their communities.

Today, American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. is a thriving organization, with members and chapters around the country, including the Tampa Bay area. According to the Survivor's Outreach Services Coordinator, the Tampa Bay area contains the highest concentration of Gold Star families in the state of Florida. The Tampa Bay Chapter of AGSM, Inc. currently serves 50 Gold Star Families though, as they put it, "there are no boundaries for this organization as we share in one another's loss and grief, no matter where a Gold Star family may live." These incredible women have found strength in solidarity, while still honoring the individual memories of each of their children. The Tampa Bay Chapter's website contains the names and photographs of each fallen son or daughter, an intensely personal reminder that for these mothers, "every day is Memorial Day."

Their children gave their lives on behalf of all Americans, preserving our liberty and protecting our way of life. Gold Star Mothers "know the indescribable pain of the cost of freedom," and have found a way to give that pain a purpose. For some, this means simply being there to listen as another mother shares her grief. For others, this means attending gatherings that honor veterans and their service such as Tampa's "Field of Honor" quarterly ceremonies, participating in veteran's events at the VFW or American Legion, or supporting veteran's organizations such as the Veterans Council of Hillsborough County. By "perpetuating the principles for which they fought and died," these mothers are continuing the work that their children began.

In fact, AGSM, Inc. Tampa Bay members serve thousands of volunteer hours, giving of their time and talents to countless other charities and organizations, and doing everything from raising money for children with special needs, to advocating for grandparents' rights, to supporting disabled veterans and their families. Chapter President Toni Gross currently volunteers at the "Fisher House", a facility for the families of our military and veterans who are receiving treatment at James A. Haley VA Hospital. Others work with patients in the USO Day Room, located in the Spinal Cord Injury Unit on the Haley Hospital campus, or the USO Welcome Center at Tampa International Airport. For many of Tampa Bay's American Gold Star Mothers, being involved in their community is a way for them to "honor through service," and can be an important part of the healing process.

While the work that these mothers do is generous by any measure, not every mother of a fallen soldier is ready, or able, to devote so much of her time to the service of others. AGSM, Inc. recognizes that fact, and is committed to supporting a Gold Star Mother in whatever capacity she needs, even if that is just to provide a sympathetic ear or acknowledge the sacrifice their son or daughter made for our country. AGSM, Inc. TB has an unusually close relationship with Blue Star Mothers, who make "Blue to Gold Service Banner" presentations at funeral services of the Fallen. Our Gold Star Mothers are truly inspirational. Even though these mothers have experienced more grief and loss than most, they still find the capacity to honor others and give back to their community and our nation. They show us all that heroes aren't just found on the battlefield.