

# Legacy<sup>®</sup>

Newsletter

## Compassion *in action*

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Powered by compassion

# From the signal bridge



**F**or more than a century, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) has stood beside Sailors, Marines, and their families in life's most uncertain moments. Our legacy is built on trust, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to those we serve.

I'd like to share an important step forward for our organization, one that honors our past while thoughtfully preparing for where we're going. You'll start to see a new expression of our brand, centered on a simple but powerful truth: Powered by compassion.

This isn't a departure from who we are. The trust you place in us, the care we provide, and the impact we make every day remain unchanged. This evolution helps bring forward what has always been at our core, ensuring the compassion, dignity, and humanity behind every action are as visible as the services we provide.

We aren't leaving our history behind. Instead, we're building on it. Our former logo, last updated almost fifteen years ago, will continue to serve as our official seal, honoring the strength of our legacy. Alongside it, a new logo reflects who we are today—approachable, responsive, and ready to meet the needs of a new generation. Together, these symbols tell the full story of NMCRS: rooted in tradition and moving forward with clarity, warmth, and purpose.

At our core, our work is about people, especially in times of crisis. Recently, service members and families in Bahrain faced immediate evacuation because of Operation Epic Fury. Families left quickly, often with little more than what they could carry,

leaving behind not just their homes, but a sense of normalcy and security. In these moments, compassion becomes more than a value; it becomes a lifeline.

As families arrived in Europe and the United States, NMCRS staff welcomed them with warm meals, a safe place to rest, and a steady, reassuring presence. During the first few weeks, we supported over 2,000 families. Emergency grants covered immediate costs and provided stability, children received comfort kits which brought a small sense of ease, and our thrift shops became a lifeline for things like uniforms, important household items, children's toys, and other necessities left behind in the rush. Most importantly, families found guidance and care in moments of uncertainty.

**You'll start to see a new expression of our brand, centered on a simple but powerful truth: Powered by compassion.**

One Navy spouse wrote, "You didn't have to, but you did." That's who we are. Not just an organization that provides assistance, but one that shows up, fully in life's most difficult moments.

Moments like this remind us—relief cannot wait. Your generosity powers our mission and ensures that, when families are displaced or face unexpected crises, NMCRS can respond without hesitation, with urgency, compassion, and care in ways that truly make a difference.

Thank you for believing in NMCRS and supporting us as we move forward, honoring our legacy, and building a more hopeful future—together.

Semper Fidelis and Very Respectfully,

**LtGen Robert R. Ruark, USMC (Ret.)**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

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Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society's Legacy® Newsletter allows us to share with donors the impact of their gifts. It also informs active duty and retired Sailors, Marines and their families about the programs and services available to them. We value your privacy. The Relief Society does not rent or sell names, addresses, or e-mails to third parties.

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# Powered by compassion: A new chapter for NMCRS

By Stacey Minchin



Since 1904, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) has been a steady source of comfort and care for Sailors, Marines, and their families. Founded with compassion and strengthened by community, NMCRS began with one purpose: to support widows and families of enlisted men.

Now, NMCRS is entering a new chapter, one that honors our legacy while bringing the purpose of the organization to the forefront. Our new look and feel will be grounded in one simple truth: Powered by compassion. This truth is not just what the organization does, but how we do it. Our refreshed brand reflects a legacy of service, trust, and community support.

As times have changed, so have we, but our purpose remains constant. We are more than an organization; we're a trusted source of relief for Sailors, Marines, and their families. Powered by over 3,800 volunteers and 181 dedicated employees across 213 locations worldwide, NMCRS is a force for good. When the unexpected happens, whether close to home or across the globe, the Relief Society is there with timely support.

In 2025, NMCRS partnered with an outside firm to conduct research, collect data, and acquire input from employees, service members, donors, and volunteers. Focus groups were held along with a brand audit. What we learned is that NMCRS is a beloved brand with an impressive global reach and a long history of being a trusted lifeline, run by warm, empathetic people who understand the stressors of military life. But that care, warmth and compassion weren't coming through in our marketing efforts. Our new expression will allow these qualities to shine through. This is an evolution. It's not about erasing our history, but rather, elevating it.

NMCRS President and Chief Executive Officer, Lieutenant General Robert Ruark, USMC (Ret.), says that at the heart of this new brand is a renewed focus on impact.

"It's a clearer expression of who we are and what we deliver," said Ruark. "Financial stability, guidance through crisis, improved

well-being, and stronger readiness for Sailors, Marines, and their families are our top priorities. We are committed to helping any active duty and retired Marine, Sailor, or family member that walks through our door, and we need to make sure they know our door is open."

The Relief Society's current logo will serve as the organization's official seal used on official documents. Alongside it is a new one that reflects the organization as it exists today: modern, approachable, and deeply connected to the people it serves.



"The anchor remains, honoring our history of stability and trust," Ruark said. "The navy blue and crimson represent those we serve. A modern teal highlights the largest word in the logo, "Relief," because that's what every person receives when they turn to us. And the wave surrounding the anchor represents something powerful—the compassion that wraps around every person we serve delivered by our dedicated volunteers and employees."

Beyond the services NMCRS provides, like financial assistance, education assistance, and community support, human moments define us: moments of uncertainty that turn to relief, dignity over despair, and hope in the face of the unknown. All of these things were on display in February and March as NMCRS employees and volunteers took action to help families evacuated from Bahrain. Standing at the ready was a wave of compassion.

"Moments like these test us," said NMCRS Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer, Rear Admiral Dawn Cutler, USN (Ret.). "But in each case, everyone involved from this organization does what they always do—they show up. They assess the real need, and deliver meaningful assistance with compassion, care and professionalism."

For donors, volunteers, and partners, this evolution is an invitation to connect more deeply with NMCRS's mission—to see the real-life impact your support makes and to be part of a future where no Sailor, Marine, or loved one ever faces hardship alone.

"We're committed to standing by active duty and retired Sailors, Marines, and their families with care as our foundation," Cutler said. "It's a very exciting time and we'll continue to be a trusted lifeline delivering financial assistance and education, community care, and signature support while demonstrating every day how we are **Powered by compassion.**"

# Meeting the moment: NMCRS supports families during Bahrain evacuations

By LCDR James E. Brooks, USN (Ret.)



**D**escribing Navy and Marine Corps families as resilient hardly begins to capture who they are. Their lives are defined by constant change like packing up what is familiar and stepping into the unknown with courage and grace. A family raised in the Midwest may suddenly find themselves

learning how to prepare for hurricanes in the South. A couple from New England may trade snowstorms for earthquake drills in California or Japan. And for those forward deployed to Bahrain, resilience takes on an even deeper meaning by preparing for the possibility of evacuation as global conditions shift without warning.

"Families who arrive here go through an orientation that includes emergency readiness and what a noncombatant evacuation looks like," said NMCRS Bahrain Director Renée Rhinehart. "The Navy conducts drills, and we had a full-scale exercise in February, and we've walked through these scenarios together." Rhinehart, who has lived in Bahrain for eight years and has worked with NMCRS for five, said her office is fully integrated with installation emergency readiness teams. "The first phase is moving families to a safe location, then to a designated 'safe haven,' often a family member's home in the U.S. or a military base where children can continue schooling until it is safe to return," she said.

But no amount of preparation can fully prepare a family for the moment when a plan becomes reality.

On February 28, that moment came.

"It was pure chaos. There were missiles exploding around us. It was extremely tense and scary. We were running on adrenaline," said Navy spouse and Bahrain Family Readiness Group President Magdielis Gregory. "Leadership did a great job keeping us informed and showing they cared."

Rhinehart saw firsthand how quickly everything changed. "We had a plan, but we had to adapt in real time."

One volunteer, sheltering under the stairs, had their front door blown off its hinges. It was a stark reminder that behind every plan are real people, facing very real fear.

Through the night, families were moved out of immediate danger, traveling for hours by bus to reach an airport in the Middle East, then boarding flights bound for safety in Europe.

"When the captain came over the intercom and said, 'Let me be the first to welcome you to friendly skies,' it was the first time I felt relief," Gregory recalled.

For many, that journey led them to Naples, Italy, where NMCRS became one of their first points of comfort.

"Over two weeks, we welcomed more than 2,000 family members and 316 pets," said NMCRS Naples Director Jessica Moberly. "They arrived exhausted, overwhelmed, and in survival mode. Our volunteers met them with care and helped them rest, stabilize, and reconnect with needed services like medical and chaplain support."

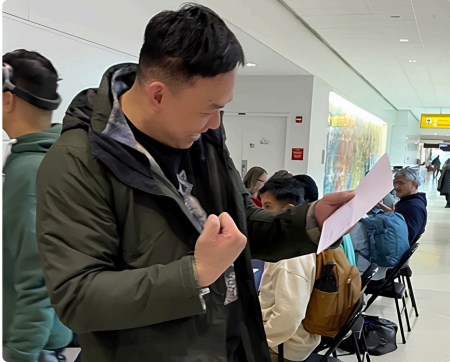
In moments like these, the challenges are not only emotional, but they are also immediate and practical. Travel disruptions, unexpected lodging, and lost plans create a financial strain many families simply aren't prepared for. "Hotels require upfront payment, and reimbursement can take time," Gregory explained. "It adds another layer of stress in an already overwhelming situation."

NMCRS stepped in without hesitation. In Naples and Sigonella, families received immediate support, including \$500 transient grants and more than \$13,500 in interest-free loans, access to thrift shops and uniform lockers, and comfort kits for children.



As families continued their journeys home, NMCRS volunteers were in U.S. airports, offering guidance, reassurance, and a familiar presence in an unfamiliar moment. To date, more than \$1.5 million in assistance has been provided to evacuated families.

But beyond the numbers, it is the compassion that lingers.



Moberly shared one note from a Navy spouse:

*'Thank you for everything. You were amazing and so good to our family. Thank you to all the volunteers for all the hard work they put in for us.  
 You didn't have to, but you did.  
 You didn't have to stay up day and night, but you did.  
 You didn't have to greet us with patience and understanding, but you did.  
 You didn't have to tolerate the snippiness and short tempers, but you did.  
 You didn't have to gather needed and nicety items, but you did.  
 You didn't have to serve with compassion, understanding, and kindness, but you did.  
 We are forever grateful.  
 You all will remain in my thoughts and prayers.'*

"This will stay with my staff and me for a very long time," Moberly said.

Because at its core, this is what NMCRS is all about. Not just meeting needs, but meeting people where they are, with compassion, dignity, and care. In the moments that matter most, it is not just the assistance that makes the difference; it is the feeling that someone is there, walking alongside you, every step of the way.



## Celebrating compassion: DAISY Award® winner



1st Lieutenant Maira Alejandra Estupinan Roldan with Visiting Nurse Natatia DePaoli and Visiting Nurse Director Rosemary Perdue.

1st Lieutenant Maira Alejandra Estupinan Roldan never expected that becoming a mother would challenge her more than life as an active duty Marine officer. Accustomed to resilience, discipline, and leading through pressure, she found herself overwhelmed in the weeks after her daughter's birth. Struggling with breastfeeding, exhaustion, and self-doubt, she questioned whether she was enough for her child during one of the most vulnerable moments of her life.

That changed when she met Visiting Nurse Natatia DePaoli. From their very first interaction, Natatia provided more than medical guidance; she offered compassion, reassurance, and unwavering support. Before meeting in person, she shared resources and encouragement that helped Maira prepare for the challenges ahead. During each visit, Natatia showed patience, warmth, and understanding, creating a safe space free of judgment.

As Maira navigated the emotional and physical demands of new motherhood, Natatia became a steady source of strength for her entire family. She not only helped Maira continue her breastfeeding journey but also restored her confidence as a mother.

Through her care, Natatia demonstrated that true strength can also mean asking for help and reminding others they are never alone. That is why she is this year's DAISY Award® winner, an honor that recognizes nurses who provide extraordinary care and compassion, leaving a lasting impact on patients and families.

To learn more visit [nmcrs.org](http://nmcrs.org) or scan the QR code below.

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# More than a game: Building financial readiness with Money Ops™

By LCDR James E. Brooks, USN (Ret.)



**T**he road to financial literacy isn't a sprint; it's a marathon. And like any great run, it takes practice and preparation. That's why Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society partnered with USAA Educational Foundation (USAAEF) to create something new, engaging, and built for real life.

In April, Money Ops™ game kits, featuring a 90-minute interactive experience, arrived at NMCRS offices around the world, ready to help Sailors and Marines strengthen their financial footing in a way that sticks.

"Our programs and services respond to a wide range of financial emergencies, and with strong financial education, some of these situations can be addressed earlier or even prevented," said NMCRS Training and Development Instructional Designer Susan White. "Money Ops™ is the culmination of our collaboration with USAAEF."

At Marine Corps Base Quantico, Marine Corps Sgt. Keila Barbaran, a finance specialist, saw an opportunity to bring this training to life. Having worked closely with Marines on pay and travel claims, she understood the real-world challenges and jumped at the chance to make a difference.

"Let's be honest, too many trainings feel like 'death-by-PowerPoint,'" Barbaran said. "That's not how Marines learn best. Money Ops™ changed that completely. It was interactive, competitive, and actually fun. The format worked perfectly."

Two sessions were held, each for 30 Marines. Participants divided into teams and were handed a "life card" with real-world financial scenarios. From paying down debt to saving for a wedding or even buying a motorcycle, teams made decisions, took risks, and learned together as they navigated four rounds of gameplay.

At the center of it all? The "Boom Wheel," which serves as a spinning reminder that life doesn't always go as planned.

"When the wheel stops, teams either gain or lose money, mimicking life's unpredictability," White said.

The room quickly filled with laughter, cheers, and a healthy dose of competition.

"There was a lot of shouting, strategizing, and celebrating," Barbaran said. "It didn't take long for everyone to get fully engaged."

But beyond the energy, something deeper was happening.

In one round, Budget Boot Camp, the focus was on the leave and earnings statement (LES), helping service members better understand their pay and deductions while spotting issues early.

"We want service members to be proactive about their finances," White said. "Understanding your LES is a big part of that."

And the impact was immediate.

"It opened the door for real conversations," Barbaran said. "Marines started asking questions about debt, credit, and their goals." Some reached all their goals in the game, some didn't, but many took the next step and scheduled follow-up services with NMCRS.

At Quantico, the NMCRS team felt the momentum too.

"Seeing that level of engagement, clients asking questions, leaning in, wanting to learn; that's what it's all about," said NMCRS Quantico Director Casie Flippin. "Money Ops™ meets Sailors and Marines where they are and makes financial education meaningful."

With Money Ops™ kits now deployed, NMCRS is bringing this energy, insight, and confidence-building experience to more Sailors and Marines, helping them take control of their financial future, one smart decision at a time.

# Tiny fighter, tremendous strength: NMCRS supports Iwakuni family through premature birth journey



Petty Officer Harley Fuqua, USN, and his wife, Jeserae Fuqua, celebrate two months with their daughter.

When a Navy family in Japan welcomed their daughter into the world far earlier than expected, their lives changed in an instant. Born at just 24 weeks and weighing a little more than one pound, Petty Officer Harley Fuqua, USN and his wife Jeserae's daughter faced an uncertain road ahead, spending her first months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

while her parents navigated the emotional and financial strain that accompanied the crisis.

During one of the most difficult periods of their lives, the family turned to Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society's Iwakuni office for support. Through the Visiting Nurse Program and emergency financial assistance, NMCRS helped ease the burden by covering transportation and hotel expenses so the Fuqua's could make the hour-long drive to the hospital and remain close to their daughter throughout her extended NICU stay.

"Being able to stay near our daughter during this time meant everything to us," the family shared. "The support we received from NMCRS helped us focus on what mattered most—being there for her every step of the way."

Now, several months later, the Fuqua's returned to the NMCRS Iwakuni office not in crisis, but in celebration. Their daughter recently marked 100 days of life, an important milestone for premature infants and their families. Though she still has several weeks ahead in the NICU, her condition continues to improve. The visit was an opportunity for the parents to personally thank the NMCRS team who stood beside them through the uncertainty and fear of their daughter's early arrival.

"We wanted others to know how much this support impacted our family," Petty Officer Fuqua said. "During one of the hardest moments of our lives, NMCRS helped us feel less alone."

The family also shared photos and video from their daughter's 100-day celebration at the NICU and expressed their hope that sharing their story publicly may help other military families understand that support is available during life's unexpected challenges.

"This is exactly why NMCRS exists," said NMCRS Iwakuni Director Intisar Al-Hayek. "When military families are facing overwhelming circumstances, whether emotional, logistical, or financial, we want them to know they do not have to carry that burden alone."

For more than a century, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society has provided financial assistance, education, and support to Sailors, Marines, and their families around the world, helping military families navigate moments of crisis with compassion and care.



Petty Officer Harley Fuqua, USN holding his daughter in the NICU



Jacqueline Webb, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, Visiting Nurse, NMCRS Iwakuni, Petty Officer Harley Fuqua, USN, Jeserae Fuqua, Intisar Al-Hayek, Director NMCRS Iwakuni

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# Make an impact with a qualified charitable distribution (QCD)

Charitable giving is more than a financial decision—it's a reflection of your values and commitment to making a difference. As you plan your charitable giving, know that a contribution to Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society helps us provide emergency financial assistance, education and so much more to Sailors, Marines, and their families.

If you're 70 ½ or older, a QCD could be a tax-smart way to make an impact. If you have a traditional or Roth IRA and need to satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD), this is a great way to make a tax-free gift to NMCRS.

## Do you qualify?

- You must be 70 ½ years or older at the time of the gift
- Gifts must go directly from your IRA to NMCRS
- Gifts must come from a traditional or Roth IRA account
- For 2026, total QCD gifts cannot exceed \$111,000 per donor

## Can I use my QCD to fund a charitable gift annuity (CGA)?

There are some rules and limitations, but this may work well for some donors!

- You can exercise this option only once during your lifetime
- There is a maximum limit of \$55,000
- The entire distribution you receive from your CGA is subject to income tax
- You can include your spouse as an annuitant for their lifetime
- There is no tax on the QCD, however this means no income tax deduction on the CGA contribution

The NMCRS development team is here to help! To learn more, contact us at [giving@nmcrs.org](mailto:giving@nmcrs.org) or (800) 654-8364.



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**NMCRS does not receive any government funds; we operate entirely on private donations. Thank you for your support!**

To explore ways you can support Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, please contact the NMCRS development department at [giving@nmcrs.org](mailto:giving@nmcrs.org) or (800) 654-8364.

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society does not provide legal or tax advisory services. Work with your attorney and financial advisor to plan charitable arrangements that work best for you and your estate. The information contained herein is intended solely for general informational purposes.



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