



Patriot Guard Riders

Standing For Those Who Stood For US



Help Us Serve the Children of Our Fallen Military Heroes

Dear Regional and State Captains:

The origins of Snowball Express date back to 2003 when a fallen service member, **U.S. Army Private First-Class Jesse Givens**, wrote a letter to his wife before he left for his deployment to Iraq that was only to be opened if he lost his life defending our country. That letter conveyed how much Private First-Class Givens loved his family, along with a list of activities for the family to do, including visiting Disney theme parks. That wish would eventually come true when they, and other families of fallen military heroes, visited Disneyland in 2006.

Mr. Sinise got involved with Snowball Express a year later in 2007 when he volunteered his band, the Lt. Dan Band, to perform for these special families. Becoming an official Gary Sinise Foundation program in 2017, the first annual Snowball Express Disney in December event at Walt Disney World Resort occurred in 2018.

PGR in Florida has been handling the full burden of their end of SBE, **but it needs to fall on all 50 States**. We **all** have a stake in the success of each year. We **ALL send our Gold Star Families** on this trip to be with other Gold Stars, bond, etc. Each year, 1000+/- Gold Star Children are provided for by the PGR. With their surviving parent, there are 1,800+/- Gold Star family members in attendance to provide for. Gary Sinise Foundation does not provide funds to assist on our end.

Starting in 2023, we began a new SBE for 1st Responders. This year, 2024, will be our 2nd year. It begins on the Saturday following the GSF Military Snowball ends. We will have a PGR room there this year as well. The 1st Responder families were sad that the GSF did not include the PGR last year, so they asked us to be there starting in 2024. Of course, we said yes. This will add to our vests, patches, dog tags, photos, comfort bears, and the construction of a First Responder Memorial Wall needed for these Hero's children.

This experience will certainly provide a fun filled vacation, but more importantly, it will create an environment of healing and a lifelong network and support group for these very special children with other children like themselves.

The Patriot Guard Riders have proudly partnered with the Gary Sinise Foundation to show these amazing Gold Star Children & Families, and First Responders & Families, that their huge sacrifice and the sacrifice of their fallen parent will NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

Below are items that are used every year. If every State can assist, be it through donations of items from the list, money for vests, patches or a combination, then we are all helping to make sure every Gold Star child has the best trip every year, and taking a little of the burden off one state of our brothers and sisters in the PGR. **We have no Borders.**

Here is a list of the needs:

Monetary:

Vests – 2023 we ordered 990 vests; our current cost is \$20 per vest. We anticipate about 700 vests for Snowball Express 2024 but will not know until we receive the attendee list around the first of October. The attendee list tells us how many of each size to order. For the 1st Responders, this will increase. We will not know the exact numbers, but it will essentially double.

Patches – our current annual patch cost is about \$5,000. We will be adding POW/MIA patches, ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL patches, GOLD STAR patches, and SNOWBALL EXPRESS 2024 patches and/or pins. This adds about \$4,000 to the patch budget. Patches are needed for 1st Responders: Fire, EMS, Police, Sheriff from across the country.

Comfort Bears – current annual cost to buy and build (vest, pins, patches) bears is about \$2,000. This will double to include 1st Responder children.

Update Global War on Terrorism Memorial Wall – annual cost is about \$3,000.

Dog Tags – the current annual cost is about \$2,600. We have been considering a dog tag machine upgrade to a laser engraver. The time to engrave a dog tag now is about 4-5 minutes. An upgrade will substantially cut the labor time down. We are still in the process of researching laser engravers. PGR in FL makes the 1000+/- dog tags in advance each year, with the Hero's name on one side, and the child's name on the other. In addition, approximately 600-800 custom dog tags are made on the spot upon request by the GSF families. This will increase as well for our 1st Responder families.

Photo supplies – 8x10 photo paper, photo folders, printer ink, signup sheets, and misc. supplies. Annual cost is about \$2,500 - \$3,000 for each event.

PGR Room Fliers and sign-up sheets for vests, photos, and dog tags – fliers are put into the family welcome bags to ensure families are aware of the PGR Room. Sign-up sheets are for ordering and tracking vests, photos, and dog tags.

Sewing supplies – name tag fabric, stabilizer fabric, thread, needles, two-sided tape, misc. supplies. Annual cost is about \$1,000. This may double adding the 1st Responders' vests.

Non-Monetary:

Give-away items: military related items: caps, hats, sport bottles, lanyards, mugs, t-shirts, towels, key chains, etc. Recruiters have been a good source to obtain military items. The kids love things that are directly related to their hero's branch of service. Anything kid friendly: glow bracelets and necklaces, stress balls, Kites were super popular, homemade jewelry, bead bracelets, hug rings, novelty head bands, anything red-white-blue. String backpacks. Items are not limited to this list. This is provided as an example of items. We can always use fun patches: flowers, animals, food, smiley faces, fruits, characters, any kid friendly patches. The kids love these patches, and they love digging through the patch box searching for buried treasure.

We spoke with Walter, our Patch person, and he told us the patches listed below are the most requested patches and are in short supply or out of stock. It would be excellent if we could find a source for these patches:

1st Infantry Division

2nd Infantry Division

3rd Infantry Division

4th Infantry Division

82nd Airborne with Tabs

101st Airborne with Tabs

173rd Airborne Brigade with Tabs

10th Mountain Division with Tabs

Special Forces with Tabs

75th Ranger

1st Cavalry

All the Army Enlisted and Officer Ranks

All branches small rank patches

Any patches for the other branches

First Responder

Fire Departments

Police Departments

EMS

Sheriff

NOTE: we cannot use Velcro patches due to difficulty sewing.

Some list of giveaways needs to include as much military branded stuff as we can get. They loved the rubber planes, water bottles, lanyards, hats, etc. The bubbles were a hit but only small ones please. The big ones were harder to give away. The boys loved the stretchy toys and any kind of gadgets, flashlights. Girls, of course, love coloring, girl toys, or any kind of jewelry.

Both Monetary and physical donations need to arrive no later than September 1st. Of course, donations are **always** welcome, but this deadline is so the PGR in FL can focus their efforts on things that they still need once donations are counted.

SHIPPING INFO:

Please send mail to:

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Questions:

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Thank you all for all you do for our families,
Be Blessed,

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