

MICHELLE NORMAN
2019 AFI NAVY SPOUSE OF THE YEAR
ADVOCATE FOR MILITARY CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Michelle Norman, **2019 AFI Navy Spouse of the Year**, is a Navy spouse of 25 years and mother of a 16-year-old daughter with cerebral palsy and multiple other disabilities. After years of successfully fighting in schools and courts to ensure her daughter receives the minimum education required by law, she was contacted by multiple military families around the country dealing with similar problems in public schools. Seeing that so many children will benefit from her dedicated efforts, the Virginia Beach resident has become a passionate advocate for other military families with kids with special needs.

Norman enacted change through persistent engagement with Congress and Virginia legislators. She successfully pushed for a study on military children and special education in the National Defense Authorization Act 2020. The resulting report will give legislators the information needed to address gaps in education. Norman is raising awareness of education challenges faced by our military children through Congressional advocacy, to include her speaking at the 2019 Congressional Military Family Caucus Summit and co-authoring the **PROMISE Act** (Protect the Rights Of Military Children in Special Education) with the 116th United States Congress. On the DoD level, Norman is working to reform Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). She also continues to push for teaching parents about student's educational rights.

Locally, Norman has enacted change by supporting bills that now help low income military families access an appropriate education and upcoming legislation to include appointment of military spouses to the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on the Educational Opportunity for Military Children. She co-founded the PROMISE Team and the support group Parents for FAPE, participates as a member of the Virginia Department of Education's Military Student Support Process Action Team, and continues to lobby for stronger military spouse participation in organizations that have significant impact on our children's education.

Norman currently lives in Virginia Beach, VA, with her daughter and son, ages 16 and 10. Her husband Cassidy is deployed overseas serving as the Commanding Officer of the USS Mount Whitney. "My family believes strongly in doing the right thing, even when it is difficult. We are starting to make great progress for military families and it is my privilege to advocate and be a voice for our most vulnerable children," she says.

**MICHELLE NORMAN
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA**

PUBLICATIONS

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