



What Makes a Great American Defense Community?

There perhaps is no greater champion of a defense installation than its host community. Through the Great American Defense Communities program, the House and Senate Defense Communities Caucuses recognize those champions — the cities, counties and regions whose actions support and nourish their installations and the military family's quality of life.

Every day defense installation champions work to support the military families living in their community. Whether it is welcoming service members home when they return from deployments or expanding educational opportunities for military spouses and children, these communities work to ensure that service members and their families are welcomed, appreciated and supported.

Beginning in 2016, the National Association of Defense Communities will annually recognize communities that go above and beyond to support service members and the military family quality of life through the Great American Defense Community program (GADC). The program is intended to recognize the efforts of communities, big and small, that improve quality of life for service members, veterans and their families.

The Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County nominated the Eglin-Hurlburt community for consideration as an inaugural designee of this prestigious award. With demonstrated long-standing and unwavering support and innovative initiatives benefiting our military personnel and their families, the Eglin-Hurlburt Community has received the Great American Defense Community designation. Community evaluation criteria included:

- **Community Building and Integration:** provides an environment in which service members, their families and veterans are welcomed and integrated into the community fabric
- **Support and Collaboration:** has a formal military-community support organization that includes advocates from local governments, non-profit organizations and area businesses to form installation-community partnerships that enhance services to service members, their families and veterans
- **Educational and Employment Opportunities:** provides a wide range of job opportunities for service members and their families; and ensures quality educational opportunities for military children, spouses, service members and veterans
- **Family Support:** offers a range of support to service members and their families before, during and after deployments, and as they transition from the military.

As a recipient of this designation, Eglin-Hurlburt community partners may promote the official designation emblem proudly. Through local and national events, selected GADC communities will be held up as an example of how communities can best support our nation's military men and women.

