Salute to Service at ASU returns Nov. 6–16 with events across metro Phoenix

Celebration includes Sun Devils football game with F-35 jet fighter flyover, veterans pow wow, author discussion and other events

By Jerry Gonzalez, ASU News
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Arizona State University will celebrate those who serve the nation and their communities, and the families who support them, during Salute to Service, Nov. 6–16, with events across ASU's Tempe, Downtown Phoenix, Polytechnic and West Valley campuses, and virtually for selected events.

This year's theme, "family," reflects the role families play in supporting military members, veterans, first responders, public servants and community volunteers. The theme also coincides with ASU Family Weekend, which will be held Nov. 6–8 and includes the signature Salute to Service football game Nov. 7.

"Service is rarely an individual experience. Behind every person who serves is a family and a community sharing in the sacrifices, challenges and successes," said Matt Schmidt, director of development and strategic partnerships at ASU's Pat Tillman Veterans Center and Salute to Service committee chair. "This year's Salute to Service brings people together to recognize those important bonds while giving the entire ASU community many ways to participate."

The Pat Tillman Veterans Center currently supports more than 23,000 military-connected students on campus and online, including active-duty personnel, National Guard members, reservists, veterans and dependents. ASU enrolls the second highest number of students using GI Bill benefits among public universities nationwide.

Salute to Service 2026 will feature educational, cultural, recreational and community-building events, many of which are free to the public. Event organizers encourage the university and local communities to participate. This year's featured Salute to Service events include:

ROTC Joint Run

ASU's Army, Navy and Air Force ROTC cadets and midshipmen will kick off this year's Salute to Service with a three-mile formation run from Old Main to Mountain America Stadium.

- **When:** 6 a.m., Friday, Nov. 6
- **Where:** Old Main, Tempe campus
- **Cost:** Not a public event but news media are welcome to attend

"A Piece of My Heart"

This award-winning play brings to life the true stories of six women who served during the Vietnam War, exploring their courage, sacrifice, humor and resilience, as well as the lasting effects of war. Two ASU student veterans are participating in the production.

- **When:** 7–9 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 5; 7–8 p.m., Friday Nov. 6; noon–1 p.m. and 7–9 p.m., Saturday Nov. 7; and 2–3 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 8
- **Where:** Empty Space Theater, ASU Performing and Media Arts building, 970 E. University Drive, Tempe
- **Cost:** $5–10

Pat Tillman Veterans Center Family Matters Brunch

Military and veteran families of ASU students are invited to meet Pat Tillman Veterans Center staff and enjoy games, entertainment and an opportunity to connect with other military-connected families.

- **When:** 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Nov. 7
- **Where:** Memorial Union, Tempe campus
- **Cost:** Free

Salute to Service football game: ASU vs. Colorado

The signature Salute to Service event will feature the Sun Devils taking on the Colorado Buffaloes. Game-day activities will include Sparky's Touchdown Tailgate, military-themed programming before and during the game and a flyover. The 310th Fighter Squadron "Top Hats" from Luke Air Force Base will fly over Mountain America Stadium in F-35 Lightning II jet fighters to kick off the game.

- **When:** 5:30 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 7
- **Where:** Mountain America Stadium, Tempe campus
- **Cost:** Ticket prices vary

320Live! Veteran Organizations

The ASU Alumni Association's virtual series will feature three accomplished Sun Devil graduates who lead businesses and organizations that support veterans. The online format provides an opportunity for ASU Online students and others outside metro Phoenix to join.

- **When:** 4–5 p.m., Monday, Nov. 9
- **Where:** Online
- **Cost:** Free

Veterans Voices: Dependents Panel Discussion

Military family members, spouses and dependents will discuss their experiences navigating military life, higher education, GI Bill benefits and other opportunities and challenges facing military-connected families.

- **When:** 3–4 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 10
- **Where:** Online
- **Cost:** Free

Salute to Nutrition

UPDATE: *THIS EVENT IS CANCELED DUE TO KITCHEN REPAIRS.*

ASU Chef Kent Moody will lead a hands-on cooking class where participants can sharpen their kitchen skills and prepare a healthy meal. The class is open to military members, veterans, first responders and frontline workers.

- **When:** 3-4 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 12
- **Where:** Health South, first-floor instructional kitchen, 500 N. Third St., Downtown Phoenix campus
- **Cost:** Free

"Citizenship in the Age of Endless Wars"

U.S. Marine Corps veteran and National Book Award winner Phil Klay will discuss the divide between military and civilian experiences before joining ASU Professor Roger Thompson for a conversation about how the humanities can help Americans understand and respond to war. The program also will be streamed on ASU Live.

- **When:** 4–5 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 12
- **Where:** Carson Ballroom, Old Main, Tempe campus, and online through ASU Live
- **Cost:** Free

Monthly Social: Skate Night

The Office for Veteran and Military Academic Engagement's monthly social will bring veteran and military-connected students together for an evening of skating, food and community.

- **When:** 6–9 p.m., Friday, Nov. 13
- **Where:** Skateland, 7 E. Southern Ave., Mesa
- **Cost:** Free

24th Annual ASU West Valley Veterans Pow Wow

This annual gathering celebrates Native American heritage while honoring the contributions of all U.S. veterans. Dancers, drummers, elders and families will participate in traditional ceremonies, with an announcer explaining their symbolism, protocols and spiritual significance.

- **When:** 11 a.m.–10 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 14
- **Where:** Fletcher Lawn, 4701 W. Thunderbird Road, West Valley campus
- **Cost:** Free

Future Visions: Art and Stories from the Veterans Imagination Project

This student showcase combines visual art, futures thinking and speculative storytelling to support the transition from military to civilian life, strengthen personal insight and build community connections.

- **When:** 1–3 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 14
- **Where:** Rob and Melani Walton Center for Planetary Health, 777 E. University Drive, Tempe
- **Cost:** Free

Additional Salute to Service events will be held throughout the 11-day observance. For the complete schedule, registration information and event updates, visit the Salute to Service homepage.

This story originally appeared on ASU News.

Main image



Arizona State University alum Air Force Lt. Col. James Ellison, commander of the 161st Maintenance Squadron, poses with Sparky and other Air Force members in late 2025 after unveiling the "Sun Devil Air Power" nose art on a KC-135 Stratotanker air refueling jet belonging to the 161st Air Refueling Wing, Arizona National Guard, based out of the Goldwater Air National

Guard Base in Phoenix. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News