

DANDELION: SONGS INSPIRED BY MILITARY KIDS AND FAMILIES

BY AWARD-WINNING FAMILY MUSICIAN AND NAVY VETERAN

GREG LATO

PRE-ORDER APRIL 18, 2025 'MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD'

OUT MAY 23, 2025 'MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH'

"Music as relatable to kids as it is nostalgic for parents" – *Broadway World*

**"Engaging stuff for kids of all ages that will leave everyone feeling happy and satisfied."
– *Midwest Record***

PROVIDENCE, RI (March 21, 2025) – Award winning family music artist and children's book author **Greg Lato** is highlighting and amplifying the voices of military kids and families with a special new project. "I have recorded a children's music album where the songs are inspired by meetings and conversations with military families. The experience of hearing their stories and what they go through was amazing!" Greg says. The album features military kids, active-duty musicians and veterans.

His third children's album, titled ***Dandelion: Songs Inspired by Military Kids and Families*** got its name because the dandelion is the official flower of the military child. It represents the resilience and adaptability of military children. The title track features a military kids choir from CAMMO (Center for American Military Music Opportunities) in Virginia.

Greg Lato is no stranger to military life; he was an aircraft firefighter on the flight deck of the USS Constellation aircraft carrier in the United States Navy for 4 years.

Greg says, "As a military veteran, I have learned how important it is for people from many different backgrounds to come together in a meaningful and positive way to navigate change and accomplish a common goal. (The song 'Shine So Bright' featuring a military kids choir from Portsmouth Rhode Island middle school highlights this idea that together we are stronger, it takes a village to be heard and being brave is our superpower.)

Now I have listened to these wonderful military families in order to make their voices heard through song. I am letting people know, who are not in that world, what they go through and endure to serve this country and allow us to enjoy the freedoms we all have.

Like military veteran and spouse Joshua Chiarini said during our conversation with his military family, 'Freedom is not free!' The song 'Bigger Than Me' features the sentiment about being involved in something bigger than yourself.

Greg adds, "The journey that this project has taken me on has gone beyond my expectations. It has run the gamut of emotions from heartfelt to happy and everywhere in between. There are a lot of themes on the album that are central to the military family experience. Moving from place to place, meeting new friends, constantly being the new kid, dealing with a spouse and parent that is away, and the wonderful support system that they encounter wherever they go." Songs like 'Home Is Not a Place' and 'Hi, I'm New Here!' (a duet with 14-year-old military kid Kaleyana Ludwig) highlight these common experiences. The song 'Helping Out' (a duet with Iraq War

veteran and fellow children's music artist Mr. Pete's Playhouse) is about the kids helping to hold down the fort at home while a parent is deployed.

For example, the kids in the Kiser Family and the Rivers Family have not stayed in one school for more than a couple of years. They were asked how they deal with the constant change in their young lives and ultimately as a result of it, what does home mean to them? Even though many of the kids go through these similar experiences, they often deal with things in different ways. Whether it is keeping family traditions alive by bringing their Christmas decorations to each location, family game nights or like Cecilia Rivers says, "Hearing the birds chirp wherever we have lived makes me feel like nothing's changed."

For 11-year-old Elly Clague who lost her Navy veteran dad to PTSD, she goes to the Dare to Dream therapy ranch which she calls her 'happy place'. Riding the horses and interacting with the animals brings her comfort. Elly says, "Getting to bond and hang out with animals, it calms me down and makes me happy." The song 'Smile' was a result of this experience and features two active-duty Navy musicians Michael Brehm and Justin Lockett from Navy Band Northeast on horns. It expresses the idea that it is ok to feel sad every once in a while, as long as you take the time to find things that make you smile.

And what children's album featuring military kids would be complete without including the actual term for military kids, which is 'Brats'! This short interlude also features a military kids choir from Portsmouth, Rhode Island middle school.

There are also songs that have nothing to do with the military experience specifically, but are more universal things that the families enjoy, just like any other family. The first single 'Old School New School' is a play on words about the kids literally often having both but is really about how the parents teach their kids about the old school, while the kids teach their parents about the new school. The music video features 14 military kids! The songs 'Dippin' Chicken' and 'Gotta Eat a Pizza' are just silly songs that are based on when families talked about traditional family food nights that helped their homelife stay consistent.

The song 'Before I Had Kids' is one that comes from Greg's heart about the connection he has as a dad to his two kids Siena 11 and Brianza 8. It also derives from the sentiment that would serve as a common thread while speaking with the military parents. The idea that "we should enjoy these moments, because we'll never get them back, and I can't remember what life was like – before I had kids." It also features his kids toward the end of the song with a tear-inducing moment saying the words "We love you daddy".

The final song on the album 'To Be a Veteran' teaches kids about the importance of respecting and thanking veterans for all they have done for the country. It also helps them to understand how the transition from military to civilian life may not be smooth, and how care and compassion goes a long way to helping them navigate through the change. This is especially prevalent if the veteran is one of their parents.

Greg Lato's last album *Adults These Days* reached the top 10 on the iTunes Children's Music Chart. His first children's album *Create My Own World* features legendary children's artist Bill Harley. It has won a 2020 Family Choice Award, a Creative Child Award and has reached the

top 15 on the iTunes Children's Music Chart. His songs are featured on 14 official Apple Music playlists and have over a million streams!

Greg also released two children's books. *Try* is about not being afraid to take chances, and *Everybody Needs Someone* is an inclusive ode to friendship, family, togetherness and belonging. He is also a member of the Grammy Recording Academy.

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