

From Elva Resa's editorial office in Minnesota, **Karen Pavlicin-Fragnito** lends influence and support to the military community. Her company, Elva Resa, has given voice to the military experiences of more than 70 authors and illustrators.

**In the crowded foyer of the Rayburn Office Building on Capitol Hill, Karen Pavlicin-Fragnito talks with members of Congress and other volunteers as they assemble USO care packages for spouses of deployed military service members.**

Going into each package is a special edition of "Deployment Journal for Spouses," created in a custom size especially for this USO program.

The journal is just one of the many military family resources published by Karen's company, Elva Resa Publishing, based in St. Paul, Minn. Creating the custom edition is just one example of how Elva Resa partners with organizations to bring those resources to military families all over the world.

# March Military Spouse Influencer

Meet the godmother of the milspouse book movement.

By Terri Barnes, Senior Editor for Elva Resa Publishing, Air Force Spouse





*Karen (center) supports veterans and families at an ice-fishing tournament, giving away Coloring My Military Life coloring books to military children. Here, she is with Tom Goodrich (left) executive director of Fishing For Life and Greg Scott (right) who set up a live video feed so deployed service members could be part of the event with their families.*

### A TRAILBLAZER

Over the past 22 years, Karen has grown Elva Resa into the leading traditional publisher of books for, about, and by military families. Its portfolio includes books for adults and children about deployment, school transitions, careers, grief, and other military life topics. Elva Resa's books and authors have won numerous national awards, garnering recognition for military life and those who live it.

As a Marine spouse, Karen wrote one of the first military family resources, "Surviving Deployment: A Guide for Military Families." A new edition comes out this fall.

"Surviving Deployment" draws on Karen's experiences during her Marine husband Bob's frequent deployments, beginning before Desert Storm when deployment resources were almost nonexistent.

"We didn't have blogs or Facebook groups," she said. "When the unit deployed, we got together in person and shared what we were doing to help each other, whether that was finances, care packages, or parenting."

Karen took notes at their gatherings and shared them among spouses for several years, eventually publishing them in book form in 2003. A few months before the book was released, Bob died of cancer. Their son, Alexander, was 3 at the time.

"Marines came from all over and were there for us during Bob's illness and after he died," Karen says. "Alexander is in college now, and his dad's Marine buddies are still part of his life. I'll never be able to repay that kindness, and I'll never forget what that experience taught me about what it means for the military community to take care of its own."

Continuing that care is part of her motivation, as Karen advocates for military families in various ways: leading a deployment workshop for spouses, engaging teens at a National Guard family day, or connecting with military families over an ice-fishing hole on a frozen Minnesota lake.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Perhaps her greatest influence to support military families happens behind the scenes in the publishing industry. Knowing the acronyms for both the publishing and military worlds, she's able to translate her expertise from one world to the other. Take BISAC, for example. BISAC, Book Industry Subject and Category, is the system publishers, bookstores, and libraries use to place books in appropriate categories to facilitate browsing. Karen advocated for the addition of a BISAC code for military family life (FAM055000 FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS / Military Families) which is now part of the industry standard.

"Having a BISAC code means military family life books are recognized as a genre by the entire publishing industry," Karen said. "This opens opportunities for military-spouse writers, no matter which publisher they work with, plus opportunities for more books about military life."

The military family BISAC is one way Karen's influence has increased the availability of books and resources for the community. She also built MilitaryFamilyBooks.com, a venue to help other publishers share quality resources with military families and to help support organizations meet government purchasing requirements. The site was the first online store to cater to military family resources from multiple publishers and is used by many military units and programs.

### HELPING OTHERS

As a current national board member of the Independent Book Publishers Association, Karen mentors other publishers about the value of military family resources and how to reach those readers. At a personal level, she coaches individual military spouses as they pursue and manage their writing and speaking careers.

Her influence extends to military communities abroad as well. Military spouses and support organizations in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, after seeing Karen's efforts for U.S. military families, have asked her to share what she's learned and help create resources for their military families too.

Both in publishing and in person, Karen uses her influence to make a world of difference. ★



**KarenPavlicin.com**  
**SurvivingDeployment.com**  
**ElvaResa.com**  
**MilitaryFamilyBooks.com**

