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## **Staying the Course: A Commitment to Children**

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**! Top Story**

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PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (NNS) -- "There can be no surer way of securing America's tomorrow than by providing the best possible education for our youth today," said Adm. Walter F. Doran, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, in remarks prepared for the 5th annual National Military Children Education Coalition (MCEC) Conference in Mystic/Groton, Conn.

Prominent national figures, including retired Army Gen. Tommy Franks, U.S. Coast Guard Academy Superintendent Rear Adm. Robert C. Olsen Jr., political commentator Cokie Roberts and Under Secretary of Education Dr. Eugene W. Hickok, attended this year's conference, themed "Staying the Course: A Commitment to Children," drawing attention to the unique situations military children face throughout their education.

"The reality in the Navy is we recruit Sailors, but we retain families," said Doran during the three-day symposium. "It's safe to say this philosophy applies across service lines. Sixty percent of military members have families, and on average, they move once every 2.9 years or an average of six times before they turn 18. By the time our military children graduate high school, most will have been the 'new kid' in at least five different schools."

One of MCEC's main focuses is to ease the transition between schools for transferring military students, a goal shared by many of the organizations and individuals in attendance at the conference, including Joint Venture Education Forum (JVEF).

According to Dr. Allen Awaya, the Oahu, Hawaii-based JVEF acts as a forum for the concerns, issues and initiatives that come from both the military and education communities in Hawaii, and provides individuals who have the authority and knowledge to help resolve those issues.

"We have gotten the (Hawaii) Department of Education to sign the Secondary Education Transition Study Memorandum of Agreement, which outlines means by which school districts can help in the issue of transitions," said Awaya, education liaison for JVEF. "What the school districts here are saying is, 'we will work towards that goal of easing transition.'"