ON THE MOVE®
the official magazine of MCEC®

APRIL IS
MONTH OF THE
MILITARY CHILD
01. OUR VISION
Every military-connected child is college-, work-, and life-ready.

02. OUR MISSION
MCEC supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.

03. OUR VALUES
MCEC remains committed to meeting our Mission and Vision through collaboration, integrity, relevance, and service.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Military Child Education Coalition®, MCEC®, and associated programs, institutes, trademarks and design elements are owned and licensed by the Military Child Education Coalition. TM/© 2021 Military Child Education Coalition. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction of this magazine, in whole or in part, is authorized with appropriate acknowledgment of the source.
Military Child Education Coalition®

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ★

Officers
Admiral (Ret) Cecil Haney, Chairman
Barbara Day, Vice Chairman/Treasurer
Brigadier General (Ret) Earl Simms, Vice Chairman/Secretary
Major General (Ret) Robert Ivany, PhD, Vice Chairman
Kathy Killea, Vice Chairman
Patricia Lester, MD, Vice Chairman

Members
Gina Allvin
Laura Aquilino
René Carbone Bardorf
Patrick J. Bingham, PhD
Renee Bostick
Command Sergeant Major (Ret) Donna Brock
Cortez K. Dial, EdD
The Honorable Chet Edwards
Lucy Reilly Fitch
Robert P. Grimsesey, Jr., EdD
Alissa Harrison, DM
Anne Haston
Barbara Flora Livingstone
Mary Claire Murphy
Ed Van Buren
Eric Waldo, JD

Members Emeriti
Cathryn Franks
Brigadier General (Ret) Robert Gaylord
General (Ret) Benjamin Griffin
William Harrison, EdD
Lieutenant General (Ret) Don Jones
Mary Keller, EdD
James Mitchell, EdD
Kathleen O’Beirne
Robert Ray
Mary Jo Reimer
Sandy Schwartz
General (Ret) Thomas A. Schwartz
Patricia Shinseki
Lieutenant General (Ret) H.G. “Pete” Taylor
Zoe Trautman
Joyce Ward

SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD ★

Executive Committee
Colonel (Ret) Stephen J. Cozza, MD, Co-Chairman
Patricia Lester, MD, Co-Chairman
Colonel Eric M. Flake, MD, FAAP
Richard M. Lerner, PhD
Ronald S. Palomares-Fernandez, PhD
Paula K. Rauch, MD

Members
Ron Avi Astor, PhD
Sarah L. Friedman, PhD
Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD
Leanne K. Knobloch, PhD
Colonel (Ret) Keith M. Lemmon, MD, FAAP
Jacqueline V. Lerner, PhD
Gregory A. Leskin, PhD
Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, PhD
Ann S. Masten, PhD, LP
Michael D. Matthews, PhD
Daniel F. Perkins, PhD

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ★

Ms. Charlene Austin
The Honorable Valerie Baldwin
Ms. Patricia “Toshi” Barron
The Honorable Carolyn H. Becraft
General (Ret) and Mrs. B.B. Bell (Katie)
Major General (Ret) Charles Bolden, Jr.
Mr. Scott Bousum
Dr. Chuck Brooks
The Honorable John Carter and Mrs. Carter (Erika)
General (Ret) and Mrs. George Casey (Sheila)
General (Ret) and Mrs. Peter Chiarelli (Beth)
Lieutenant General (Ret) and Mrs. Kurt Cichowski (Laura)
Dr. Daniel Domenech
Ms. Lea Ann Edwards
Lieutenant General (Ret) and Mrs. Phil Ford (Kris)
General (Ret) Tommy R. Franks
Vice Admiral (Ret) and Mrs. William French (Monika)
Ms. Regina Pedigo Galvin
The Honorable Pete Geren
Mr. Roy Gibson
The Honorable Robert L. Gordon III
Major General (Ret) Gus L. Hargett, Jr.
Mr. David G. Henry, Esq
Rear Admiral (Ret) and Mrs. Leendert Hering (Sharon)
Colonel (Ret) and Mrs. Anthony R. Hernandez (Jennifer)
General (Ret) James T. Hill and Dr. Toni Hill
Lieutenant General (Ret) and Mrs. William Ingram (Lil)
Ms. Marianne Ivany
Ms. Holly Jones
Mr. Gary Knell
General (Ret) and Mrs. Leon J. LaPorte (Judy)
General (Ret) and Mrs. Craig McKinley (Cheryl)
Mr. Drayton McLane, Jr.
Lieutenant General (Ret) and Mrs. Thomas Metz (Pam)
Major General (Ret) and Mrs. Paul Mock (Karen)
Dr. Robert Muller
General (Ret) and Mrs. Richard Myers (Mary Jo)
The Honorable James Peake and Mrs. Peake (Janice)
General (Ret) Dennis J. Reimer
Mr. Reginald Robinson
Mr. Gilbert Sanborn
Dr. Stefanie Sanford
General (Ret) and Mrs. Norton Schwartz (Suzie)
Mr. James H. Shelton III
Ms. Barbara A. Thompson
Lieutenant General (Ret) George J. Trautman III
Dr. P. Uri Treisman
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Utley (Ann)
The Honorable Rosemary Freitas Williams

MCEC STAFF
Rebecca I. Porter, PhD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Colonel (Ret) John L. Ballantyne
Senior Vice President/Chief Operating Officer
Tim Farrell
Senior Vice President/Chief Operating Officer
Cindy Simler
Vice President, Fund Development
Annette Farmer, JD
Vice President, Programs and Curriculum
Dalena Kanouse
Senior Director, National Capital Region
Laura Cayton
Executive Assistant and Speaker’s Bureau
Lee Ann Deal, CFRE
Director, Foundation Relations
Shellie M. Campos, PHR, SHRM-CP
Director, Human Resources
Robert Frazier, MEd
Comptroller
Debra Longley
Chief, Technology and Communications
Juan Garcia, CPA
Comptroller
Debra Longley
Program Manager, Student Initiatives
Helen Mowers
Instructional Systems Design Manager
Ivan Geter
Member Services Coordinator
Kaci McCrary
Program Manager, Professional Development
Tara Gleason, MEd
Program Manager, Military Student Transition Consultants (MSTC)
Stephanie Young
Chief, Technology and Retail
Denise Montana
Chief of Logistics and Retail
Amanda Woodyard
Community Coordinator for Northern Virginia

ON THE MOVE
Robert Frazier, Editor-in-Chief
Karen Kirk, Director of Creative
Laura Cayton, Copy Editor
Shellie Campos, Copy Editor
Kimberly Blas, Graphic Designer
04 Joint Message from MCEC Board Chair and the President and CEO

06 Against the Odds: A Military Kid Stands Tall, Remains Determined to Keep Breaking Barriers

09 Edwards Air Force Base Latest School to Adopt Student 2 Student Program

10 First Lady Praises Military Teens for Their Efforts to Help New Students

12 Military Family Life in Europe During a Global Pandemic

14 For Military Child on the Move, Art is Healing

18 SchoolQuest Initiative Keeps Military-Connected Parents, Students on Track for Academic Success

20 SchoolQuest en Español

22 Center for Military Families Connects Caregivers Locally and Nationally

24 The Braelyn Aubrey Foundation

26 Colorado Springs Girl Scout Cadettes Tackle Depression Concerns for Fellow Students

28 All Children Are Unique

The views and opinions expressed in articles appearing in On the Move® are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Military Child Education Coalition®.
MCEC® is proud to recognize all military-connected children this April during Month of the Military Child. Each year we join our country in celebrating the resiliency of military-connected children for their tremendous service and sacrifice at home in the U.S. and overseas.

On our website, you’ll find our Month of the Military Child Toolkit
Help celebrate in your area with:
• The official 2021 Month of the Military Child poster
• The Purple Up poster for your area; you can print and identify the date you are celebrating #PurpleUp
• Templates for Purple Up stickers
• Certificates of recognition for military-connected kids
• The 2021 Purple Up t-shirts for adults and youth (see below).

Purple Up and 2021 Month of the Military Child posters

Purple Up
This annual observance allows all Americans to celebrate military kids. Purple references the joint environment of the military – encompassing all service branches, Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard, and Veterans. MCEC® celebrates Purple Up this year on April 16 and encourages everyone to wear purple.

MCEC PURPLE UP T-SHIRTS
• Adult ($10) | Youth ($8)
• Bulk pricing available
• Available at Store.MilitaryChild.org

We look forward to making this year’s Month of the Military Child the best yet, and hope you will join in our celebration of the most amazing kids in the world!
Welcome to April, and thank you for reading the first issue of our On the Move magazine for 2021. This special edition focuses on the Month of the Military Child and highlights some shining examples of military-connected children who are inspiring others as future history makers.

This year MCEC proudly celebrates 23 years of service to military-connected children. Since 1998, this organization has evolved, right along with the needs of our military families, to become the premier leader for advocacy, education, and collaboration in support of all military-connected children worldwide. Our success is thanks to you.

You have been – and always will be – the best reflection of our mission’s success. Past or present; whether as a student, parent, or professional; you are resilient, determined, and inspired by possibilities. Most important, your lived experience exemplifies what it means to be a military-connected community.

The official start to spring was only a few weeks ago, and it’s great to see the green leaves back on the trees and the flowers blossoming. This time of the year represents a renewal and a season of new beginnings. In keeping with that spirit, MCEC has some new and exciting changes you will be seeing very soon.

This publication, which recently has been produced twice annually, transitions to a quarterly format beginning with this issue. We’re excited to announce releases for follow-on publications in July, October, and January. This change allows us to provide you with more current updates and news about advocacy efforts, educational opportunities, and partnerships that are working together to make a positive difference for military-connected children in your community.

The end of the school year signifies the start of PCS season. One of the articles you will read, which we have also provided in Spanish, focuses on the official launch of our SchoolQuest™ initiative. We cannot express how important this resource is to keep you and your child(ren) on track – especially during critical PCS and transition moves. Please take the time to read this article and, if you have not done so already, log on and review the website. It takes five minutes to register, and the relief you will have as a result will prove to be an investment you’ll be glad you made. Because of the generous grant from USAA, there is no cost to users for this service.

After an interruption last year, our annual National Training Seminar is back this July. Following the success of our first Education Summit in Nov. 2020, we decided to bring this year’s NTS to you as a free virtual option. Registration is open now to join us July 19-21 for the largest attended NTS in MCEC history.
The team is working diligently to partner with amazing thought leaders from across the education and military professions for our general sessions, in addition to a diverse lineup of topics for breakout rooms to offer specific opportunities for collaboration.

If you have not seen or downloaded the Month of the Military Child (MOMC) Toolkit for this year, you are in for a treat. We have details of this outstanding resource on page 3 which include the official poster, #PurpleUp promotion, certificates, and t-shirts to help you recognize and celebrate the military child.

Lastly, we’re extremely proud to introduce Tim Farrell, the new MCEC senior vice president and chief operating officer. Tim is a proven leader who has successfully led and delivered quality results everywhere he’s served. His experience and his passion for serving the military community make him an ideal fit to help expand our global efforts to educate, advocate, and collaborate for all military-connected children. Tim replaces the amazing Jack Ballantyne who is retiring after seven years with MCEC. Jack’s tenure has seen tremendous growth for the organization, and we are appreciative of his professionalism in shepherding our organization’s operations during a challenging environment. His steady hand and dedicated approach will be missed.

In closing we want to say thank you to each of you who continue to champion MCEC. Your commitment, passion, and support make each day an opportunity to improve the life of another military-connected child. We look forward to an exciting April as we celebrate the Month of the Military Child and the impact we can all have together for them as we move throughout the rest of the year.

With deepest appreciation,

Cecil Haney
Admiral, United States Navy (Retired)
Board Chair, Military Child Education Coalition

Dr. Becky Porter
President and Chief Executive Officer, Military Child Education Coalition
One day, Diego Mercado hopes to stand in a formation and recite the U.S. Army’s Special Forces creed with his fellow soldiers. Although some may see the aspiring 15-year-old middle school student from San Antonio, Texas, as a dreamer, people who know this future history maker can attest that he’s already spent a lifetime exemplifying the beginning of that creed, “With the help and guidance of my faith, I will conquer my fears and succeed.”

He’s got it all planned out. Enlist as a soldier, join the 75th Ranger Regiment, and then become a Green Beret. Sounds like a great plan, right?

He just needs the military to amend one policy.

When Diego was born doctors diagnosed him with amniotic band syndrome. This condition caused Diego to be born without part of his right leg, a portion that would later be amputated above the knee.

“The doctors didn’t know what was wrong with him,” explained his mother Jasmin, who initially placed blame on herself and wondered if his condition was due to side effects of medication she had taken or something she had eaten or drank.

“I was devastated,” remembered U.S. Army Captain Jason Mercado while thinking back to the day Diego was born. “[The doctors] didn’t know what it was and referred us off post. We just wanted him to be okay.” The couple admitted they had some initial issues with the Exceptional Family Member Program but received tremendous help from Mercado’s command.

A chance encounter with a doctor at a Shriners Hospital for Children brought light to Diego’s condition and helped the Mercados learn more about the causes and how to work with Diego during his formative years.

“Diego taught us how to be parents,” added Jason. “When he was young and would fall, we’d want to rush over to him, but we realized we had to let him figure it out. I think that showed him that he could do it.”

He was also born with several of his fingers joined together. Diego confidently refers to his right hand as “my chicken wing,” much to his mother’s jovial embarrassment.

Although Diego has a quasi-crazy sense of humor about his amniotic band syndrome, make no mistake, this young man is very serious about working to amend the policy that prohibits amputees from joining the military.

A 2018 article from Whitney Delbridge Nichels, “Soldier Amputees Have More Options for Continued Service,” reflects the advances in medicine that allow amputees to continue to serve. Sergeant First Class Joseph Kapacziewski, a Ranger; U.S. Army
First Lieutenant Josh Pitcher; and U.S. Army Captain Daniel Luckett, are proof that setbacks are merely barriers that need to be knocked down.

Perhaps the most well-known case is retired U.S. Army Colonel Greg Gadson. The bilateral, above-the-knee amputee became a reflection of perseverance, determination, and leadership following his return to duty and promotion to colonel where he served as the commander of the United States Army Garrison at Fort Belvoir, Va. He also became an actor and is featured in the 2012 movie “Battleship” and appeared in 10 episodes of the TV show “The Inspectors” from 2015-2016.

The first few years of his life, Diego was shy and reluctant to go out in public because people would look at him. He even had some bullying by kids in his prekindergarten class which did nothing to help his confidence. But when he entered Mary Beth Moreau’s kindergarten class at Meadows Elementary School at Fort Hood, Texas, all of that changed.

“We all sat in a circle, and I snapped the leg off a G.I. Joe and said, ‘This is Diego,’” remembered Moreau, who has since retired after 30 years of teaching. “I wanted everyone to see how cool he was.”

Diego, upon hearing this story got a huge smile on his face and confessed it was the first time he saw a toy that looked like him. But the toy was secondary to what Diego felt was the biggest result.

“I remember that being so crazy, and the other kids took interest,” remembers Diego. “I thought they might like me…and because of Ms. Moreau, I was able to have friends.”

According to Moreau, the kids not only embraced Diego, they called him “robot boy” and turned him into a celebrity.
From that time on, Diego’s confidence continued to grow. When the Ride 2 Recovery bicycle challenge rode by his school, soldiers would see Diego and stop to talk to him or give him a high five.

“I saw them, and I was inspired because I could see there were people like me,” said Diego. “I told my dad that’s what I want to be. I wanted to be a soldier.”

Over the years, he and Jason would register for rides, runs, and walks to support other nonprofits. Diego would ride his bike, and Jason would run beside him supporting great causes while building awareness about amniotic band syndrome.

Then in 2016, Diego received his first running prosthetic and the family increased their advocacy efforts to support EFMP-related causes and raise awareness about bullying.

“He inspires other people,” said Jason. “Everyone just gravitates toward him. He’s taught us all so much.”

Jason admitted that over the years Diego had been working to become an actor. Although he was initially cast for some projects with Nickelodeon, Steve Harvey’s “Little Big Shot’s Season 2,” an ABC pilot reality show, and Disney, nothing came to fruition.

“Even though he got discouraged, he still wanted to go for it,” added Jason.

His perseverance paid off.

Although the family can’t say too much, Diego will become the first amputee teen to be cast in a Netflix film when he appears in the Netflix movie “MixTape” alongside Julie Bowen, Gemma Brooke Allen, Nick Thune, and Jackson Rathbone.

His mom described him as “an amputee with big dreams,” and his father said, “if he sets his mind to it, there’s nothing Diego can’t do.”

Diego, by his own admission, “wants to improve every day and be the best version of himself that he can.” If history is any indication, the only limits this future history maker has will be the ones he places on himself.

---

Check out Netflix for details on the release of MixTape, and follow Diego on Instagram @MrDiegoMercado.

Special thanks to Stephanie Young for making this story possible.
Desert Junior-Senior High School is the latest school to join the Student 2 Student® program at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

S2S™ is a Military Child Education Coalition® initiative with the mission to take care of new students. This youth sponsorship program is student-led and faculty-advised. An S2S program shows students their new campus and introduces them to the new community.

“New students face many social and emotional challenges as they transition in and out of school. MCEC® core values of 100 percent acceptance, respect, leadership, and service for all, help foster positive social connections and assist incoming students feel accepted and welcomed as they adjust to their new school and community,” said Candace Lang, Edwards AFB school liaison specialist.

The S2S program will be vital for new students when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and students are allowed back into classrooms. When base schools re-open for in-person learning, there could possibly be students who may have never even stepped foot on campus in the previous year.

“The students are producing a welcome video for new students that can be accessed on their website, The Desert High, on YouTube," Lang said. “Once in-person learning resumes, they will be able to reach out and give them a warm welcome and tour of their campus.”

Students from nearby Boron and Desert Junior-Senior High Schools have joined together to receive the virtual training program led by MCEC instructors Cindy Petter and Zandra Grady. The students will learn the Student 2 Student Core Values of leadership, academics, service, finding the way, and relationships. The Muroc Joint Unified School District received a grant sponsored by Lockheed Martin for the S2S program.

“I want to thank Lockheed Martin for sponsoring this important training and the students and Muroc administration for supporting the S2S program,” Lang stated. “It provides fun ways for new students to get to know other students and to build new peer groups and it encourages new students to perform better in school.”

We are excited to welcome Baily Shaw back to the MCEC family. The former Falcon, Colorado, Student 2 Student® and MCEC Student Advisory Council member, is a second-year honors student at Arizona State University and the newest member of the MCEC Student Achievement team.

“I owe many of my defining life experiences and my passion for education and supporting military students and families to my time with the S2S program and the MCEC,” says Baily.

She is a two-time National Training Seminar attendee and graduate of the Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program at the Air Force Academy.

“I genuinely believe the skills and experiences I acquired throughout my involvement, as well as the knowledge I’m gaining through my degree path and engagement in education, have given me both the skills and the motivation to help up-and-coming S2S programs create similar opportunities and impacts for their students.”
Friday afternoon, a group of military teens got together online to talk about their efforts to connect with new students and make them feel welcome even during the pandemic-imposed restrictions.

BUT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY ZOOM GATHERING.

The conversation came during a virtual teleconference with first lady Jill Biden.

The teens were providing their perspective to Biden on their experiences, and their participation in a volunteer program called Student 2 Student®, a program offered by the Military Child Education Coalition® at more than 500 elementary, middle and high schools worldwide. The program teams up military and civilian students in an effort to welcome new students, and ease their transition.

“It was tough from the beginning when the pandemic hit. We found ways to connect with new students,” said Jacob, a sophomore at Widefield High School in Colorado Springs, and step-son of a retired soldier. But he’s glad they’re back in person at school. “We’re trying to help new students, spending time with them, doing everything we can to make them feel comfortable. It’s so hard to do that on a video conference,” he said.

“It’s nice that you’re so welcoming. I know students really appreciate your reaching out to them and trying to make connections,” said Biden. “Otherwise they’re home, and by themselves. This pandemic is really, really tough.

“One thing I love about the military community, there is no ‘no.’ You will find a way to do this. And Jacob, that’s exactly what you’re doing in your school, so thank you.”

This was Biden’s second appearance with the Military Child Education Coalition, following her keynote address to the nonprofit’s Education Summit on Nov. 17, where she discussed her desire to strengthen support for military-connected children and families.

On Jan. 14, Biden announced her intention to make military families a top priority, and she announced that Rory Brosius would be executive director of Joining Forces, an effort that began during the Obama-Biden administration. Biden praised Brosius as a passionate advocate for military families who has worked with her for nearly 10 years. Brosius is the wife of a Marine Corps veteran.

During the Obama administration, Biden worked on a number of efforts to support military children.

Students on the call described virtual meetings where they have various activities such as game nights and...
virtual dancing. Some schools have moved back to in-person classes, and the groups have been able to meet with masks and social distancing.

“It’s nice to see each other and communicate in person,” said Kaylie, a sophomore at North Augusta High School, South Carolina, whose mother is active duty Navy stationed at Fort Gordon, Georgia.

Asked what they’d like the general public to know about military children, a common theme among the students was that they learn to be flexible, and they’re selfless, stepping up in a variety of ways for their families, as their parent could be called away at any time. Kaylie said she’s had to move quite a bit, leaving behind dear friends. “I think it’s incredibly hard, but it also makes us incredibly strong as well.”

But military children can be vulnerable, and while they may try to be strong, it’s sometimes difficult. Sometimes students may feel “Hey, I’ve done this a couple of times, but I still don’t want to put myself out there,” perhaps fearful of rejection, said Connor, a senior at Burkburnett High School, Burkburnett, Texas. “That’s why I’m so happy about [Student 2 Student], because they help students to not feel like that. They help students feel accepted.”

This article was originally published Jan. 29, 2021, by Military Times.

MilitaryChild.org

RYZUN  Senior
Ramstein High School, Germany | Air Force
I am a military child and have lived overseas my entire life. This is my 4th year in S2S. My hobbies include soccer, as well as going to the gym, and hanging out with my friends on the German economy.

KAYLIE  Sophomore
North Augusta High School, South Carolina | Navy
I am 15 years old. I have been a military child my whole life and joined S2S this school year! My family is quite large – I have one biological brother, and 4 step siblings. I love to paint, sing, and travel!!

CONNOR  Senior
Burkburnett High School, Texas | Air Force
I play basketball, run track, and cross country. I am in the top 15% of my class, participate in the S2S club, and am the Vice President of our school’s National Honor Society Chapter.

SOPHIE  Senior
Alamogordo High School, New Mexico | Air Force
I was born in Italy and currently live in New Mexico. I am a senior and will be attending Arizona State University next fall. I am on the golf and swim team. My favorite thing to do is travel and try new food.

JACOB  Sophomore
Widefield High School, Colorado | Army
I live in Colorado Springs and love writing, reading, music, acting, and art. I love being a part of S2S, it’s helped me be able to truly communicate and understand with new/transitioning students.
Life was normal last February. The kids were busy with activities, and our family was looking forward to exploring France during Ski Week. We began our holiday with a family trip to Paris. Paris streets normally pulsating with life were empty. We heard rumblings in the news about a virus in China that was spreading into Europe and affecting Italy. Hospitalizations and death rate notifications began to light up our phones. This was not a normal virus. A horrific pandemic was quickly spreading across the globe. It was unpredictable and unprecedented. We cut our holiday short and came home.

Back home in Belgium, the following Monday, we sent the kids to school. As the week progressed, things took a drastic turn.

By the weekend, the country had gone into lock down. Only grocery stores and pet food stores remained open. A national order had been put in place allowing only one adult to shop for the family. Only essential personnel were authorized to go to work. Restrictions were tight, travel was no longer allowed, playgrounds had been roped off, and exercise was limited to the walking route within 5 km of our homes.

Police began patrolling the villages and ticketing those who were not following the rules.

With no notice, the DoDEA schools across Europe sprang into action and transitioned all curriculum to a virtual platform. The teachers and administrators quickly organized and distributed textbooks and laptops, posted online tutorials for parents and students, launched school websites with schedules and links, and began teaching via Google Classroom with unprecedented speed.

We were so lucky to be a military family.

The kids had already struggled with the move to Belgium from the U.S. We were a year into living in Belgium and had left behind a neighborhood full of kids, bike rides to school, and English.

We found ourselves now living in the middle of an old European village, with few children, and francophones in every direction. We had spent every weekend we could exploring Europe, providing the kids fresh new experiences and an appreciation for their new home.

Initially, when we broke the news to them that they would not be back in the classroom, they were thrilled. The prospect of hanging out at home with us, playing video games, and eating their way through the day was exciting. Disappointment settled in when they were given
their daily assignments and remote meeting times.

The entire spring semester was unseasonably sunny, and we could not have been luckier given that a Belgian spring is typically wet and gray.

As a family, we went for long walks and bike rides. We experimented with recipes in the kitchen. We made faux stained-glass creations on the windows. We built puzzles, and we played a lot of board games.

WE SLOWED DOWN.

It was nice to be able to just exist without all the extra noise of work, school, and the million after-school activities that the kids were always involved in.

Around the time school ended, the borders began to open back up. We took full advantage and scheduled big trips for the summer.

We drove to Denmark and explored Copenhagen. We drove to Switzerland and hiked all around Interlaken. Our trips were somewhat normal, except for the masks we wore everywhere we went, and the amount of hand sanitizer we used.

We had one final trip to Italy that we were excited about. A week before we were to leave, we received emails from many of our planned stops informing us that they were closing. We were disappointed and grew concerned about the possibility of another lockdown.

Good news came, and school would be in session again! The kids were so excited to see their friends. Still, school has been very different.

Social distancing has been at the forefront. The students take “fresh air breaks,” eat lunch in the classroom, and specialists come to them. You would never know it’s any different than they have ever had, because all the kids are happy.

I have not heard a single child complain. These military children from all over the world have adapted without blinking, proving that military children are incredibly resilient and special.

As we look toward the remainder of the school year, we know that this period in our lives will remain forever memorable.

We have learned above everything else that the most critical aspects in our lives are not material but rather the interactions we have with one another. DoDEA Europe West recognizes that amid the pandemic children are not just learning the curriculum, they are learning to problem solve and adapt at a level far greater than generations before them.

Whether in the classroom or on the playground, these military kids were born to succeed.
TAMPA, Fla. — Whether it’s simple drawings, or colorings, or something a little more elaborate, art has always been something that makes the Reyes family feel together, even when they have to spend time apart.

Nearly every day, 11-year-old Victoria works on her drawings, with Mom and Dad’s encouragement.

“It’s almost like making your imagination come to life almost,” said Victoria as she worked on her latest piece.

She’s been drawing since preschool. But now, layer by layer, she uses an iPad given to her by Dad to bring her images to life.

“Victoria has been asking to go to art classes, but every time we find someone (to teach her), it’s time to move,” said Mom Maxine.

That feeling is one Victoria knows too well — her parents are Air Force and Army veterans. Maxine is retired, and Dad is Active Duty.

“We’ve both deployed,” Maxine Reyes said. “I’ve deployed to Haiti, Qatar, and Afghanistan. We’ve switched places — he stays home with our baby, and he’s gone when I stayed home. Both of us were gone at once and we had to take our daughter to stay with a friend.”

Victoria has moved nine times in 11 years.

“It’s kind of sad leaving all your friends behind. Making new ones is a little bit hard, but you’ll get used to it and you should be fine,” she said.

The outlet that’s always been there for her is art.

“When it comes to coping, I usually do it when I’m upset, and usually it all goes through my head,” Victoria said.

Now, what was once a way to cope is getting her some recognition: Victoria was recently the youngest child in a local art show.

“A lot of people came over and asked about the drawings. I think I did OK,” she said with a smile.

The show gave her a sense of pride that she and her Mom want other kids to feel.

“That’s my goal is to get kids, especially military kids, to display their work, because I would love to include them in future art exhibits that we have,” Maxine Reyes said.

They’re currently looking for other military child artists to take part in shows once every few months.

“Just knowing that she has that skill that she can go to anytime has given us some kind of comfort when we’re not with her,” Maxine said.

Learn more about Victoria and see her amazing artwork at VictoriaReyes.com.
What You Need To Know

- Military child Victoria Reyes has moved nine times in her 11 years
- She uses iPad, stylus to create artistic works
- Family seeks other military families for regular children’s art shows
April is Month of the Military Child
SchoolQuest Initiative Keeps Military-Connected Parents, Students on Track for Academic Success

BY JENNY RASMUSSEN

PCS season can be chaotic, specifically when it comes to transitioning your child from one school district to a new one.

Be honest, wouldn't it be amazing if everything you needed for a smooth transition between schools was in one place? How about knowing what you need to set your child up for success before the movers come to pack out your home?

WE KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, AND MCEC® HAS THE ANSWER.

As we celebrate the Month of the Military Child, we are proud to announce the launch of the SchoolQuest™ online platform.

SchoolQuest is free and allows parents and students the ability to register and create customized student profiles designed specifically to manage important checklist tasks and deadlines for a variety of academic and transition topics.

Thanks to a grant from USAA®, MCEC has spent the past two years identifying the areas that are most important to military-connected parents who often face unknowns about their child’s education during military moves and times of transition to new locations. SchoolQuest offers step-by-step guidance, course recommendations and graduation requirements by state and overseas (for those students enrolled in DoDEA schools) to eliminate concerns and keep every student on track.

Additionally, teachers and counselors can register for SchoolQuest and use the platform to work with students and parents to map out courses, explore academic options, and establish attainable goals for every student.
SchoolQuest also offers complete access to state transition information for MIC3 provisions, Department of Education resources for exceptional learners, state-mandated assessments, immunizations, and driver’s license information.

This platform is a universal resource that serves all military-connected parents and students regardless of where parents choose to enroll their student. No matter where a child learns - public, private, charter, or homeschool, SchoolQuest is designed to meet that child’s needs.

SchoolQuest allows you the benefit of establishing a portfolio for every child in your home so you can identify the information you need to digitize and carry with you, along with a back-up for ease of access during your move. Additionally, SchoolQuest provides information to help you identify and apply for scholarships, Veteran education benefits, and guides research options to explore other resources for post-high school academic goals.

The tools you need to manage school moves that work for you and your kids is a click away. Register today at SchoolQuest.MilitaryChild.org.
La época de PCS, es decir la época en que las familias militares tendrán que mudarse de un lugar a otro puede ser caótica, sobre todo cuando sus hijos cambian de una escuela a otra, de un distrito escolar a otro.

Seamos sinceros, ¿No sería increíble que todo lo que necesita para una transición sin problemas entre escuelas estuviera en un solo lugar? ¿Qué le parecería saber que es lo que necesita para ayudar a su hijo a tener una transición educativa exitosa, antes de que llegue la compañía de mudanza a empaquetar sus cosas?

Sabemos cómo se siente, y en MCEC tenemos la respuesta.

Mientras celebramos el Mes del Niño Militar, estamos orgullosos de anunciar el lanzamiento de la plataforma en línea: SchoolQuest™.

SchoolQuest es completamente gratuito y les permite a ustedes, los padres de familia y a sus hijos la posibilidad de registrarse y crear perfiles personalizados, diseñados específicamente para administrar metas y plazos importantes previamente establecidos en diferentes áreas académicas y de transición.

Gracias a la generosa contribución de USAA®, MCEC ha dedicado los dos últimos años a identificar las áreas más importantes para los padres con vínculos militares, quienes a menudo se encuentran llenos de dudas acerca de la educación de sus hijos durante los traslados militares y los períodos de transición a nuevas escuelas o distritos escolares. SchoolQuest ofrece orientación paso a paso, recomendaciones de clases y requisitos de graduación por estado y en el extranjero (para aquellos estudiantes que están inscritos en escuelas de DoDEA) para disipar algunas de estas preocupaciones y mantener a cada estudiante en camino hacia al éxito académico.
Además, profesores y consejeros pueden registrarse en SchoolQuest y utilizar esta plataforma para ayudar a los estudiantes y a sus padres a planear clases, explorar opciones académicas y establecer metas alcanzables para cada uno de ellos.

SchoolQuest también ofrece acceso completo a la información sobre la transición estatal de las provisiones del MIC3, los servicios del Departamento de Educación para estudiantes excepcionales, exámenes obligatorios por estado, registro de vacunación e información sobre el permiso para conducir.

Esta plataforma es un instrumento universal que beneficia a todas las familias vinculadas a las fuerzas armadas, independientemente del lugar en el que los padres decidan inscribir a sus hijos. Independiente del lugar de aprendizaje – escuelas públicas, privadas, charter o el propio hogar, SchoolQuest está diseñado para satisfacer las necesidades académicas de sus hijos.

SchoolQuest ofrece el beneficio de crear un portafolio digital para cada uno de sus hijos para que usted pueda identificar la información que necesita llevar consigo, junto con una copia digital completamanente segura para facilitar el acceso a esta información durante su mudanza. Además SchoolQuest también brinda información que les ayudara a identificar y solicitar becas, beneficios de educación para veteranos, así como también guiarlos en la búsqueda de opciones que les permitan encontrar otros recursos para alcanzar sus metas académicas después de la preparatoria.

Las herramientas que necesita para planear transiciones escolares que se adapten a usted y a su familia se encuentran a un clic de distancia. Regístrese hoy mismo en SchoolQuest.MilitaryChild.org.
The University of Texas San Antonio™ Center for Military Families has been helping military caregivers connect with each other on a local scale through the Writing Back to You group formed in 2017. Now these military caregivers—family members, friends, or acquaintances who provide care and assistance for former military service members with mental or physical disabilities and illnesses—are connecting with their peers across the country.

With the assistance of Julie Coffey, community liaison for the Military Child Education Coalition®, UTSA’s Writing Back to You group decided to throw off its “cloak of invisibility” and submit stories to the MCEC national publication: On the Move® magazine. The hope was to forge deep connections to a broad audience of caregivers, veterans, and supporters outside of San Antonio.

The group’s stories were accepted and published in the December 2020 On the Move feature “Stories of a Caregiver.” The article presents five different perspectives from military caregivers sharing their lives, thoughts, and emotions with an introduction written by Thomas Porter, UTSA professor and director of both Writing Back to You and the Blesser Storytelling Project.

These personal stories were written by Porter, as well as former UTSA professor Raquel Cataldo, UTSA student Sarah Dancer, Mission 22 special engagement representative Sabine Ward, and bereaved mother Shalia Ketchell Swaggart. Their tales of devastation, grief, enlightenment, and adaptability are each captivating in their own right.
“The UTSA Writing Back to You group is powerful in their words and actions and it shows in these writing pieces,” said Melissa Garcez, senior program coordinator for family engagement and the Center for Military Families. “They are using their experiences to inspire others and to move forward.”

Finding a way forward is what the group has always been about. Carmen Fies, former director of the Center for Military Families, started the Writing Back to You program when she became aware of the need to support this unique population of students. The program gave them a judgment-free space to share the raw truth about their lives and experiences. Since then, this group of caregivers has been meeting regularly to write as a form of self-healing and expression.

“I had lost my sister two days after turning in my dissertation to the UTSA graduate school in 2017,” Porter recalled. “I was still picking up pieces of my broken heart when Dr. Fies asked me if I would hold writing workshops for military caregivers. Hearing their stories, I knew I was on sacred ground. We found healing in our tears.”

Even through the pandemic they wrote, shared, and contemplated in virtual sessions led by Porter. As stories began to emerge, so did a common theme: caregiving through an unprecedented year like 2020 brought new meaning and purpose to a group that had usually shared their writing in a small setting. Porter added that group member Colleen Saffron, a published writer and multi-talented artist, suggested the theme of invisibility. These published works stressed the importance of making themselves and their loved ones “seen.”

Through efforts like Writing Back to You and others, the Center for Military Families seeks to enhance the daily experiences of military families through the holistic engagement of resources, support, and connection. The CMF is a program through Community Outreach and Transfer Recruitment under the Division of Strategic Enrollment.

Garcez added that she is thankful for national programs like the MCEC and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation that offer excellent support for military caregivers like those in the Roadrunner community. “Military caregivers are certainly ‘hidden heroes’ in our nation,” Garcez said.

This article was originally published by USTA Today on Feb. 26, 2021. Learn more about the USTA Center for Military Families at: future.utsa.edu/familia/.
When U.S. Army CW3 Don Culp and his wife, Erin, found out they were expecting their second child together, it was only six months after the birth of their first daughter, Cadence.

The couple welcomed their second daughter, Braelyn, on Jan. 16, 2009, five days before Culp was assigned to report to Fort Rucker, Ala., for Warrant Officer Candidate School where he would transition from being an enlisted soldier to a pilot.

However, six months after the family’s arrival, their world was turned upside down when Braelyn had a seizure and was sent by Life Flight to Sacred Heart Children’s Hospital in Pensacola, Fla.

Although the family was eventually allowed to return to Fort Rucker, they had routine appointments in Gulf Breeze, Fla., with a neurologist to learn more about Braelyn’s seizure.

“We were told they had completed a microarray analysis to look at her DNA for any issues,” said Culp. “We waited weeks for the results and finally learned Braelyn was diagnosed with a rare genetic condition known as chromosome 2p16.3 deletion.”

Culp clarified in layman’s terms that his daughter had part of her DNA that was missing. The neurologist explained this deletion can occur in up-to one out of every 4,000 children who may have medical issues that include: developmental delays, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and or autism.

“Initially, we were told by doctors the deletion was very rare, and Braelyn was only one of a few people between the U.S. and Europe to have it,” added Culp.

Both parents had never heard of this condition, and as they tried to wrap their heads around what was happening, Culp said he learned another fact – one that any parent would hate to hear.

“She got this deletion from me,” added Culp. “It appears that I am a carrier, and it was passed to her.” Culp had no idea. The couple’s oldest daughter had no signs, and Culp’s child from a previous marriage did not have any either.

“We didn’t know what to expect and could not forecast the amount of hospital stays, amount of seizures, the required therapy, or other said programs or resources that were needed to get her all that she needed,” continued Culp. “We just knew we had a long road ahead of us.”

The Culps found immediate relief through TRICARE and the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) at Fort Rucker. “If we hadn’t had TRICARE
I WANT TO honor MY DAUGHTER, tell HER STORY, AND ensure HER LEGACY LIVES ON. or EFMP assistance, who knows where we would have been or how we would have gotten through.”

Culp also acknowledged that the Fort Rucker command was also extremely supportive and allowed him to be with his family and then resume his training when he could focus on the required tasks needed to graduate.

Amid therapy sessions, long nights, and uncertainty, Culp completed the requirements to become an Apache pilot and was assigned to the South Carolina National Guard’s 1-151st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion.

While deployed in 2011, Culp came home on emergency leave twice when Braelyn was hospitalized. “I was advised not to go back because her condition could be fatal,” remembered Culp. “We learned she had experienced several seizures and a stroke which caused a portion of her brain to be severely damaged. She was only two.”

Culp made the difficult decision to return to his unit during the deployment and returned home in May.

About four months later, on Oct. 1, 2012, Culp returned home from his civilian job and learned his daughter had been sick all day. After giving her a bath, he gave her a hug and a kiss and recalls her gently patting his back. That would be the last time he would hold his daughter.

The next day, Culp received a call from his neighbor who told him to come home immediately. When he pulled onto the street he saw the emergency vehicles. As he tried to make his way into his home an officer stopped him. He was trying to tell me about my daughter but was struggling to find the words,” said Culp. “For some reason, I said ‘Are you trying to tell me my daughter is dead?’”

Culp said the officer acknowledged in the affirmative and told him Braelyn didn’t make it.

“Braelyn lived a short life, and she passed at three years old,” added Culp. “She had brown, wavy hair and green eyes. She was innocent, joyful, and was a fighter. She faced trial after trial and overcame just about everything that was thrown at her. I love her and miss her so very much.”

In her memory, the Culps started the Braelyn Aubrey Foundation to help children with impairing conditions achieve self-independence and have a better quality of life.

“I feel this is my best way to honor her and her fighting spirit,” said Culp. “We want to ensure the success of this organization, help others, and advocate for the programs that played a huge part in my daughter’s care and provided us with moments of being able to see her joyful, sweet, and caring nature.”
Think back to your days in junior high school. What was your biggest worry? Did it have to do with making sure you had the coolest clothes? Was it hoping that the person you liked also liked you, too? Or was it constantly trying to figure out where you put your homework?

For 14-year-old Kaitlin, the daughter of a U.S. Navy submariner, her biggest worry was how she could make it through the day. Although she didn’t know it at the time, this military-connected kid was suffering from depression.

A 2018 article from The Journal of Pediatrics, cited by the Center for Disease Control, found that approximately 1.9 million children from the ages of 3-17 years are currently diagnosed with depression. And that’s just the children identified.

Once she received her diagnosis and began treatment, Kaitlin realized there was an opportunity for her to help others.

“At my breakthrough, I realized there were other kids who were probably going through the same things as me,” said Kaitlin.

“I wanted to create a safe space for them to go when things got difficult for them at school.”

To make her dream a reality, she turned to a group who had been a constant in her life for many years – the Girl Scouts of America.

She elicited the help of Grace, a fellow Cadette in her troop who Kaitlin said she had the strongest bond with. Grace is also a military-connected kid, but her father left the service when she was very young.

Together, the young ladies chose to tackle an optional challenge afforded to all Cadettes and compete for the Silver Award.

The Girls Scouts state on their official website that the Girl Scout Silver Award is “the highest honor a Cadette can achieve.”

“We chose to make a mental health room at our school,” added Grace. “Hopefully, any student who has something going on where they don’t talk to their friend about things deep inside, can go to the room and be able to calm down, take a mental health break, and a breather.”

Kaitlin’s and Grace’s mothers said trying for the Silver Award takes a huge commitment.
that must include required hours, something that benefits the community and not the Girl Scouts, involves the community, and is sustainable.

The girls received support from their Chinook Trail Middle School Principal, Tom Andrew, and counselors. They also completed 100 direct mail letters to professional counselors and therapists to learn more about professional recommendations of items that could be considered for the room.

Even though Grace mentioned that “COVID basically ruined our fundraisers,” the girls were not to be denied. They took the initiative to create an Amazon Wish List and were successful in raising $2,000-worth of items for the room.

“We asked for two or three of everything,” added Kaitlin. “This helps us meet the requirement of the room being sustainable because items can be easily replenished.”

When asked if the room had a name, the girls replied, “Roots and Wings,” which is taken from a Chinese proverb – and interestingly echoed in Principal Andrew’s greeting on the Academy District 20 website.

The room is scheduled to be open before April of this year, and will be overseen by the school counselors. Teachers and counselors will work together for identified students to use the room, by escort, for 10 minutes at a time.

The girls’ moms both said that Academy District 20, which is located in Colorado Springs, Colo., is “really serious about the mental health of students.” They hope, as do Kaitlin and Grace, that the success of the Roots and Wings room will result in making this room an option at all schools throughout the district in the future.

Kaitlin, Grace, and their moms ask that anyone who has questions or would like to learn more about their Roots and Wings room, please email them at Gstroop409silveraward@gmail.com.

Learn more about the Girls Scouts of America – the group that helped Kaitlin and Grace become future history makers, and how you can get your daughter involved at GirlScouts.org. You can also find the latest news regarding depression and other conditions that military-connected children are facing at AACAP.org.
HAPPY MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD!

It’s that time of year where we celebrate military-connected children for the strength, talent, resiliency, grit, and stick-with-it-ness they exhibit in the midst of constant transition and change.

No doubt, MilKids are truly extraordinary in every way, including those with exceptional needs.

As a parent of five military-connected children, including Zeke, who was born with Down syndrome, I’m often asked what it’s like raising a child with special needs in the Active Duty military lifestyle.

MY RESPONSE: DIFFICULT.

But some of life’s greatest gifts are cloaked in a challenge – like a jewel inside a stone or a pink starburst in an extra sticky wrapper. Teaching our children that greatness is measured by what it takes to discourage them and then rejoicing as they surpass expectations is a gem I wouldn’t trade. And this is not untrue for Zeke. The journey of being a military-connected kid has created in him a unique strength, bravery, and spunk – the undeniable “force” within him that makes it impossible to accept defeat.

It’s common for any parent of a child born with a disability to experience shock, sadness, and fear over the unknowns of raising a child with special needs.

Will he have friends? Will he get sick often? Will he learn to read? Will he ever live independently? And as I reflect back over Zeke’s 15 years of life, one of the most profound and normalizing things communicated to me as a young mom was the truth that all children are unique and gifted with interests, skills, talents, and abilities regardless of...
developmental limitations. “Treat Zeke exactly like you would your other children” and he will rise to meet those expectations.

This was shared with me by a private school administrator who, the following week, denied Zeke entrance to her school citing an inability to educate him.

I quickly learned that kind words and a caring, sensitive heart are not indicators of tangible resources, including well-trained staff. So often, education professionals desperately want to provide a greater level of opportunity for their students, but lack the training, support, empowerment or resources needed to feel like it can be accomplished. This experience broke my heart, and lit the fire of passion for advocacy, collaboration, awareness, equality, and opportunity.

Zeke, now a freshman in high school, has successfully transitioned through five public schools, two private schools, and even three semesters as a homeschooled student. He has friends all over the globe, is rarely sick, reads like a champ, and is on a promising pathway to live an independent life; he continues to make forward progress in academic learning and social relationships.

He’s experienced rejection, been denied access to services, fallen behind in meaningful academic progress, and year after year has unmet individualized education program (IEP) goals.

YES, ALL OF THIS IS TRUE.

When moving to a new duty station and making housing and school decisions, my husband and I consider community culture and attitudes toward disability, as well as support for professional learning. We have seen seasons of outstanding progress thanks to passionate professionals who implemented creative, out-of-the-box methods when fancy resources were limited. We also

The journey of being a military-connected kid has created in him a unique strength, bravery, and spunk – the undeniable “force” within him that makes it impossible to accept defeat.
regularly struggle to gain and sustain appropriate medical care and equipment to meet Zeke’s unique health needs; also indicative of the transitory military lifestyle.

But when I consider celebrating Zeke during Month of the Military Child, the festivities are incomplete without expressing gratitude for the amazing community of professionals who, at every stop on the journey, have labored long hours in the trenches of love to help us cultivate Zeke’s superpowers of resiliency. Yes, there are many challenges to raising an exceptional MilKid, and this is why we continue to advocate and raise awareness, but there are also many wonderful partners along the way. They are the creative. The passionate. The determined!

We are so grateful for you!

In the words of Rose Tico from Star Wars: The Last Jedi, “That's how we're going to win. Not by fighting what we hate, but saving what we love.”

Here are just a few of the education leaders who have made a personal difference for Zeke as a MilKid:

- **KATHY DAVIS, Grissom Elementary**: His kindergarten special education teacher who modified everything to accommodate him in every context of school life and set him on a trajectory for success.

- **NATALIE GOULD and JESSICA CASE, Tulsa Public Schools**: His elementary general education teachers who had the patience of Job and taught him appropriate behaviors.

- **DANIELLE MEIER, Chloe Clark Elementary**: His speech therapist who emphasized the importance of phonics and set a foundation for learning to read.

- **COURTNEY WIDMAN, Steilacoom Historical School District**: The second grade teacher who modeled “integrity of services” delivering Zeke’s specifically designed instruction in her general education classroom and won Teacher of the Year.

- **CASEY WYATT, Chloe Clark Elementary**: The assistant principal who was his fierce advocate.

- **NIKKI RASMUSSEN, Tacoma Baptist School**: The private school teacher who refused to give up teaching him to read.

- **BRENDA RUSSELL, Central Texas Christian School**: The private school principal who not only admitted Zeke, but championed for him to have access to opportunities and peer acceptance.

- **AMANDA NECESSARY, Belton Independent School District**: The assistant principal who took a risk and placed Zeke on the school-wide leadership team because she saw his potential, and

- **SYDNEY BALDOMERO, Cheyenne Mountain High School, District 12**: The paraprofessional who daily encourages his creativity and helped him to paint “The Child” during art class!
This year, R. Riveter teamed up with the Military Child Education Coalition to support their cause in aiding military children with the tools to ready themselves for the next phase of school, work, and life. Now until May 31st, 2021, when you use code MILCHILD2021, 10% of net sales will go to this cause and you will receive free shipping on orders of $45 or more.

The code (MILCHILD2021) will be eligible SITE-wide (excluding the Heirloom Collection). Orders must be a minimum of $45 to qualify for the free shipping and the 10% of net sales to MCEC.
GET AHEAD OF PCS TRANSITION SEASON!

SchoolQuest has the tools to give you peace of mind that your students are enrolled in the right classes on the first day of school without the usual hassles of a PCS move. And it’s free forever.

Register your child today at SchoolQuest.MilitaryChild.org.

MCEC®
SchoolQuest™

Military Child Education Coalition®
2021 Call for the Arts
VISUAL ARTS • CREATIVE WRITING • PERFORMANCE ART

MCEC® is proud to announce our 2021 Call for the Arts campaign. Open to all military-connected children, CFA offers kids an opportunity to express their creative side.

This year’s theme is “The View from My Home.”

We encourage artwork, photos, and poetry that reflects the family dynamic, local community, and the people and places that make your part of the world unique.

Winners will receive a $100 Amazon gift card, be recognized at our virtual National Training Seminar, highlighted on our social media platforms, and included in our 2022 calendar.

GOOD LUCK TO ALL OF YOU. Please visit MilitaryChild.org for details on the submissions and the required entry form.
SHOP the MCEC STORE!

>> REDUCED ITEMS while supplies last <<

Silicone Wristband (Adult & Youth) $1.25
Purple stretch wristband with grey print “Kids Serve Too.” Show your support for military-connected children.

Color-changing Coffee Mugs $3.95
Color-changing mug featuring children’s artwork. Just add any hot liquid into the black coffee mug and like magic it changes into a beautiful, amazing child’s artwork. Three designs to choose from, or get them all!

The World Needs More Purple People $12.95
The best things are purple! But, what’s a purple person? Purple people love to ask questions. They are kind and hardworking, and they laugh a lot. A purple person is an everyday superhero! How do you become one? That’s the fun part! Penny Purple will lead you through the steps.

MCEC Spirit Bundle $30.95
Show off your MCEC spirit with this bundle and save over $5.00! *MCEC T-shirt may vary

My Story Book $5.00
A compilation based on four teenagers’ experiences in dealing with deployment.

SUPPORT MILITARY KIDS
T-shirt $10.00
Soft, heathered purple shirt comes in both V-neck and crewneck.

VISIT store.MilitaryChild.org TO ORDER NOW!
Registration now open

MCEC® 2021 National Training Seminar

College-, Work-, & Life-Ready

Embracing the Future for #Milkids

Register now & receive a complimentary gift!
*First 500 registrants

July 19 – 21

Free virtual event

For more information visit MilitaryChild.org/NTS