Special Insert:

When a Parent Leaves the Military

resources to support children
The Military Child Education Coalition

VISION STATEMENT:
Every military child is college, workforce, and life-ready.

MISSION STATEMENT:
To ensure inclusive, quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition.

GOALS:
1. Provide responsive and relevant support systems, resources, and products.
2. Expand the MCEC outreach through engagement, advocacy, and partnerships.
3. Execute a strategic communications plan.
4. Build a strong, sustainable, and financially sound organization.

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Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is a GuideStar Gold Participant
www.guidestar.org/profile/74-2889416

The Independent Charities Seal of Excellence is awarded to the members of Independent Charities of America and Local Independent Charities of America that have, upon rigorous independent review, been able to certify, document, and demonstrate on an annual basis that they meet the highest standards of public accountability, program effectiveness, and cost effectiveness. These standards include those required by the U.S. Government for inclusion in the Combined Federal Campaign, probably the most exclusive fund drive in the world. Of the 1,000,000 charities operating in the United States today, it is estimated that fewer than 50,000, or 5 percent, meet or exceed these standards, and, of those, fewer than 2,000 have been awarded this Seal.
FEATURES

4

Transition & Special Needs
2017 AFI Military Spouse of the Year, Brittany Boccher, navigates her journey with a special needs child and constant transition.

17

Special Insert: When a Parent Leaves the Military.
Resources to aid veteran families as they transition to civilian life.

WHAT ELSE IS INSIDE

Special Needs
7 Supporting ADHD
8 Supporting Children and Family Survivors of Military Line-of-Duty Deaths
10 Children's Grief & ADHD

Education
12 Teachers of Teachers
14 The Reach Toward Charter Schools
20 Update on the Military Student Identifier

Thriving Military Kids
22 Abigail Finds Success in Transitions
24 Sirena's Journey to Service
25 Watermelon Call for the Arts Submission
26 Elementary Student 2 Student™ Growth
27 Baileyisms Quotes from a Military Kid

MCEC Resources
28 Defining Service to Military Families
30 Tell Me a Story
31 Parent to Parent™ Webinars
33 MSTC Mark Patton
33 MCEC Presence in Washington D.C.

Become an On the Move® Author
MCEC publishes articles addressing issues, trends, and policies supporting military and veteran-connected children and youth.
Views expressed do not necessarily agree with positions taken by MCEC. Submit ideas to Newsletter@MilitaryChild.org.

about the cover:
Joi, Grade 12
Osan American High School
Osan, Korea

www.MilitaryChild.org
FROM THE CHAIRMAN

November is a great time of year to reflect on all that the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) has accomplished this year and an opportunity to plan our future.

As an organization focused on helping our military and veteran-connected children I am proud of all that we have accomplished. Throughout 2017, we have continued to expand our spheres of influence through state partnerships, school districts, and many other relevant organizations. We have updated and developed new parent and professional development programs and our online offerings have continued to grow and are reaching those who are not able to attend our face-to-face trainings. MCEC advocacy efforts continued at the national and state level to ensure that our military and veteran-connected children have an inclusive quality educational opportunity.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of On the Move® where we highlight some of the challenges that ADHD, Down Syndrome, and line-of-duty deaths present and the resources that are available to help or guide one in the right direction. We are also very much aware of the challenges that a parent transitioning out of the military has, so our insert focuses on available resources.

We are proud of our success and know that it is because of our generous donors, dedicated volunteers, and loyal supporters - THANK YOU! 2018 is going to be an even better year ... for the sake of the child.

Sincerely,

Growing a Community of Support

At MCEC, we strive to empower military and veteran-connected children and the community that surrounds them. Please join us as we work to ensure the children of our service men and women have everything they need to reach their full potential.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

Your tax-deductible donation to MCEC funds programs for students, parents and professionals, providing vital peer and community support systems. MCEC will be honored to be the recipient of your charitable contribution designated in one of the following areas:

- Student/Youth Initiatives
- Parent Initiatives
- Educator/Professional Initiatives

Together, we will grow a community of support ...for the sake of the child.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we embark on our 20th year of serving the military-connected child, it is a time to not only reflect on the work we have done, but determine the challenges that will continue to exist and the work we have left to do.

After advocating for the inclusion of a Military Student Identifier (MSI) for nearly a decade, and its recent inclusion in all 50 states’ legislation, including the District of Columbia, we will soon be able to use abundant de-identified data to determine where our military children are and what they need. Our MCEC expert, David Splitek, PhD, shares more on MSI and its importance in continuing our work (p.20).

The move from military to civilian life often presents additional stressors for children and youth, particularly when there are parental service-related injuries. Thanks to generous support from the Bob Woodruff Foundation, MCEC developed, When a Parent Leaves the Military, a series of video lessons and resources to aid veteran families in support of their children as they transition to civilian life. Check out our featured insert to learn more.

We have been hard at work developing new resources for the adults who interact with military children. The MCEC Parent to Parent™ team developed a series of webinars on a range of topics as a resource for military and veteran-connected parents. If participants cannot attend live sessions, the recordings are available instantly online. Free and open to everyone, topics include MIC3 – Know Your Child’s Rights, Building a College Mindset, Transition Portfolios, Preventing the Summer Slide, Resiliency and Bully Proofing, and more! Deborah, a lifelong educator, uses the webinars at her school. “These webinars are essential for me to do my job. I recommend (them) to parents,” she shares. See page 31 to read more on Deborah’s testimony and learn more about these resources.

As we focus in on the next 20 years of service to military and veteran-connected youth, we will focus on creating strong, sustainable futures for them. Our 20th Anniversary National Training Seminar, Military and Veteran-Connected Children: Strong Roots, Sustainable Futures, will take place in Washington, D.C., July 23-25, 2018. Save the Date for a unique opportunity to hear from senior military, education, and thought leaders while obtaining in-depth coverage of current information relevant to military-connected children.

Thank you for your continued support of the children of those who serve us all.

Sincerely,

Mary M. Keller
President and CEO, Military Child Education Coalition

www.MilitaryChild.org
Transitions and Special Needs
The challenges of transition can be different for each member of the family. New education standards and how their child will fit in can be concerning for parents, while the child can be concerned about making new friends, sports, classes, and more. “The service member has a new job, a direction, a plan,” explained Brittany Boccher, an Air Force spouse, mother, and 2017 AFI Military Spouse of the Year. “The rest of the family doesn’t have those things from the start. We need to get involved in the community and find our ‘why,’ our purpose.”

Brittany and her family move on average every three years, but many times sooner. “Being a mom and a spouse is challenging because I spend a lot of time single parenting from circumstance. I have to explain to my kids why one parent is gone and deal with those emotions,” shared Brittany. “It’s a bit of a struggle.”

Just recently, Brittany and her husband had to explain to their daughter Harper that she was born in Texas, moved to California, then back to Texas, back to California, to Arkansas, and now on their way to Washington, D.C. Harper is only five years old and is already struggling with the idea of leaving teachers and friends. “I have to explain to her the opportunities she is going to have. It’s something I didn’t think would start this early,” shared Brittany. “As a parent, the continuity of education is a concern. We want her to stay on the same playing field and not be too far ahead or too far behind.” Fortunately, Harper “doesn’t meet a stranger” and develops relationships quickly. “She doesn’t realize that she’s already shown us how well she adapts.”

Brittany also has a two-year-old son, Blake, who, as she likes to say, “Is rocking an extra set of chromosomes.” Or what most people know as Down Syndrome. In Arkansas, Blake would not go into public school until six years old, spending his years until that age in a developmental day school. However, when they move next month, he will not have that option and will have to go into the public school system at two and a half years old. “It’s the biggest fear for me as a parent,” shared Brittany. “Is he going to have that continuity? Is he going to have the resources he needs to be successful?” she continued. “We’re concerned, but we know it’s something we have to do as a military family.”

On top of raising her family, Brittany is a business owner, avid volunteer, and currently holds the title of 2017 AFI Military Spouse of the Year. “It is a privilege, an honor, and humbling to know my fellow spouses believe I can do a good job in representing them,” shared Brittany. “I don’t take that lightly.”

Resources are crucial to the success of transition for the Boccher family and many families. The Military Child Education Coalition, Easter Seals, National Down Syndrome Association, school districts and their early childhood development programs, and School Liaison Officers are a few places Brittany has looked to for guidance. She recommends to all families challenged with transition to become a part of their community and look for resources within it.
### Kindergarten Entrance & School Starting Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Kindergarten Entrance Age</th>
<th>Compulsory School Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Jan. 1</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Jan. 1</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>Sep. 30</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Jul. 31</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Aug. 31</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Sep. 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
<td>Aug. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Jul. 31</td>
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<td>New York</td>
<td>District Decision</td>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Carolina</td>
<td>Aug. 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
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<td>S. Carolina</td>
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<td>Tennessee</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Sep. 30</td>
<td>Aug. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Aug. 31</td>
<td>Aug. 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All states offer Kindergarten, and 19 of those states require that children turn 5 years old by September 1 to enroll. However, Kindergarten attendance is not required in most states. In 42 states, compulsory school attendance starts at age 6 or later. Refer to the chart above for school entrance ages in states with the highest military concentration.

FIVE TIPS TO HELP WITH TRANSITION
Amanda Hulsey, M.Ed, Program Manager, Professional Development

**TIP No. 1**
**Know Your Rights: Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act**

Even if your student does not struggle academically, but you see them having trouble concentrating, reading, or organizing important tasks and school work, they may have ADHD, a disability protected under Section 504.

**TIP No. 2**
**All kids are different, how do I know what the school district should provide for my child?**

All students are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This means that the school district cannot limit the services rendered, just because of their expense. However, school districts across the country may utilize various programs that are deemed “appropriate.” All students are different and each situation is different. The needs of the child should be outlined in a “Section 504 Plan”, where appropriate supports available are detailed and implemented consistently.

**TIP No. 3**
**How do I know that my child will receive the same services when I move?**

Military parents are no stranger to learning new routines and requirements each time they move, including special education services. While the federal law is always the guiding source, each state has different funding and implementation guidelines. Therefore, military parents must be diligent in communicating their child’s needs each time there is a PCS move. States have their own guidelines of determining the qualification parameters for various disabilities. As you prepare to move, gather up copies of 504 Plans or Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and hand-carry those with you to the new location. This will help to make the transition process smoother for your child. Meet the new experience with an open mind and understand that the special education team is there to help you develop a support plan that complements the strengths of your child.

**TIP No. 4**
**Starting the Process — How do I request an evaluation? What if the school wants to evaluate?**

If you or the school suspect that your child is experiencing ADHD, the school district must evaluate or provide an explanation to you as to why they are refusing to evaluate. Many school districts will want to evaluate so they can provide as much support to your child as possible. The evaluation will be done, at no cost to you. The evaluation cannot be delayed in order for the school district to experiment with intervention strategies first.

**TIP No. 5**
**Parents know their child better than anyone else, but how do I know if my child needs an evaluation for ADHD?**

Some children with ADHD experience considerable restlessness, communication deficits, trouble interacting appropriately with peers, recalling information, completing assignments on time, beginning tasks, and following through with tasks.

To learn more about a school district’s Section 504 obligation to provide FAPE to students with ADHD, visit the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) website, at Ed.gov/OCR.
Military-connected children attend schools in virtually every zip code across the United States. They live daily with the understanding that their parents have chosen to serve. This means there may be a call for their parents to stand in harm’s way to protect our country and its citizens.

When service members are killed in the line of duty, their deaths affect their children, nieces, nephews, younger siblings and other young family members. Each of these deaths also touches the families of other service members. And while most of the grief experiences for these children will be similar to those of other children who have lost loved ones, there are some distinct issues as well.

“I was sorry to hear about your father’s death. I wonder what this has been like for you.”
CHALLENGING CHILDREN’S ABILITY TO FEEL SAFE

Military children learn to live with assumptions that allow them to feel safe in their day-to-day lives. “My mom is smart and strong, and she knows how to keep herself safe.”

“My dad promised he will come home, and he never breaks a promise.”

When a line-of-duty death occurs, a range of possible responses challenge these assumptions and the ability to feel safe. These include:

• A sense that the world is more dangerous.
• Regret about not being a “better” child.
• Resentment that the loved one made a choice to serve instead of staying safe at home.
• Guilt and shame about the mixed feelings that may arise.

SPEAK UP TO OFFER SUPPORT

One of the most important steps any educator can take is simply to acknowledge the student’s loss. Straightforward, non-judgmental language is best. For example, an educator might say, “I was sorry to hear about your father’s death. I wonder what this has been like for you.”

It’s important to leave an opening for a student to respond. Educators will be most effective if they listen more and talk less. Because every child, like every adult, responds to death differently, it’s also essential not to make assumptions about the child’s experience. For instance, saying, “I know exactly how you feel” would not be helpful.

It’s also best to avoid “cheerleading.” When an adult says, “This is difficult, of course, but you need to be strong for your family and help them remember the good things,” it’s like saying, “I’m not really comfortable hearing about what you’re thinking or feeling.”

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS: RESOURCES TO HELP

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students (www.grievingstudents.org) offers a set of free resources that empower school communities across America to provide support to grieving students. Included in these resources is a learning module for educators that addresses the specific challenges facing military survivors. The module was developed in collaboration with the Military Child Education Coalition, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).

When educators are prepared to offer support to military-connected students who have experienced the death of a loved one, a few simple steps have the potential to literally make a world of difference.

A SENSE THAT THE WORLD IS MORE DANGEROUS

You can find all of the modules, including the one specifically addressing children survivors of military line-of-duty deaths, at the website for the Coalition for Grieving Students (grievingstudents.org). On the home page, look for the link to “Additional Resources,” then “Additional Modules” section, and scroll down to “Support for Military Line-of-Duty Deaths.”
Background —

I was a military kid. I suppose I will always be a military kid. My father was a career soldier. We moved often, sometimes because he was transferred and sometimes because he was deployed. While I was successful in school, I saw many fellow students struggle with the differences in curriculum and in teachers and the adjustment to new towns, neighborhoods, friends, etc.

In the 30+ years of my work as a social worker with children and adults, I have seen the faces of loss and grief. In trauma and crisis, in foster care and adoption, in dying children and grieving children in hospice, there are so many similarities. The experience of the death of a loved one produces grief. Similarly, the ambiguous losses that come with family disruption of moves, deployments, incarceration, foster care and adoption, abuse and domestic violence, and other trauma produce grief in children and adults. I have been intrigued by Charles Corr (Corr, Nahe & Corr, 2006) and Ken Doka’s (2016) theory that grief impacts persons in all dimensions of their lives: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and cognitive. I have observed children in the military and in children’s homes and foster care experience high rates of school problems, failure, and diagnosis with multiple learning challenges including ADHD.

In 2011, I completed and published a study of 1755 children in families in a Central Texas School District in which I found a significant association between loss in children and a diagnosis of ADHD (Harris & Zipperlen, 2011). Further, using logistical regression, we found that multiple losses increased the odds of a diagnosis of ADHD with each subsequent loss. The national ADHD rate is 3-5%. The ADHD rate in that school district was more than 10%. Children in military families comprised 24% of the sample. Those children had an ADHD rate of more than 14%. Despite that ADHD is a psychiatric diagnosis, most diagnoses in this study were made by family physicians rather than psychiatrists or other mental health professionals. We did not differentiate between loss by death or loss by ambiguous losses of deployment, divorce, incarceration, etc.

I have observed children in the military and in children’s homes and foster care experience high rates of school problems, failure, and diagnosis with multiple learning challenges including ADHD.

As a follow-up to this study, I am working with the Family Health Center, a federally qualified health center, to examine the connection between children’s loss and grief and ADHD. We recently completed a secondary data analysis of three years of data of primary care physician diagnosis of ADHD and the losses, including ambiguous loss, associated with those children’s experiences. That paper has just been published by the Journal of Loss and Trauma. We are currently working with the Family Health Center and the Baylor Psychology Center to identify children with symptoms of ADHD and
We believe that what we are learning about ambiguous loss and attention problems is true of military children dealing with multiple moves, deployments, and family disruption.

I continue to wonder what the ADHD rate is in children in military families and whether there are differences in those families whose children were in the highest risk years, 5-12, during the recent years of Gulf Wars with multiple deployments in the same families. Most important, I wonder what models for resilience for managing ambiguous loss might be effective to protect military children from the impact of ambiguous loss, beginning with protecting from cognitive impact of poor concentration, attention, and school performance.

RESOURCES
Most children (92%) who have a caregiver in the U.S. military attend school “off-post” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2011). This means military-connected students are enrolled in nearly every school district in the U.S. (Military Child Education Coalition, 2011), and most of these children are taught by 3.1 million public school PK-12 teachers in the U.S. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Even with this many educators working with the large population of military-connected children in the school setting, there is no consistent requirement for pre-service educators to receive any kind of training regarding the military lifestyle/culture.

There have also been concerns about the growing disconnect between the civilian and military lifestyles. Today there is an increasing number of individuals who grow up with no connection to the military. Compare this to 60 years ago when almost everyone had an immediate connection to a U.S. service member before the military became an all-volunteer force (Zucchino & Cloud, 2015). This gap in lifestyle and understanding may have a large impact on many educators’ ability to effectively work with and support military-connected students in the school setting.

Before they receive their professional license, most PK-12 educators complete a university program that includes courses on human growth and development, teaching methodology, and subject area content. Universities can play a significant role in preparing educators who can recognize and respond to the needs of military-connected students. However, there is little information regarding how university faculty are preparing future educators and school professionals. What do these teachers of teachers know regarding military-connected children and their families, and is this population of students and families addressed in the university preparation of future PK-12 teachers and other school personnel?

Researchers surveyed faculty members from one university who teach future PK-12 administrators, general and special education teachers, counselors, school psychologists, and social workers. Faculty members provided information regarding their general knowledge of military-connected children, feelings of competence in working with and meeting the needs of military-connected children, knowledge of the military-student identifier requirements, inclusion of information regarding military-connected children in courses taught, and interest in adapting curriculum to include topics related to military families.

The responses indicated faculty members had limited knowledge of military-connected children which arguably would make it extremely difficult to teach this information to future educators.

An overwhelming number (94%) reported their own preparation had included little or no time on military-connected children.

Less than 10% knew a substantial amount of information regarding how the military culture/lifestyle might impact children’s mental health and education.

Only 14% currently include information regarding military-connected children in their courses and 23% were aware of other faculty members within their program who might do so.

However, there is potential for change. Of the faculty surveyed:

- 80% indicated they would like to know more about preparing future educators to meet the educational
and mental health needs of military-connected students.

- 83% understood the importance of including information on military families in their program’s curriculum.
- Most (80%) were interested in adapting their program’s curriculum to include topics related to military-connected children and their families.

Based on the findings at this university, faculty members need and want to include more content regarding military-connected children and their families into their programs. This may be particularly true in universities near military installations where future teachers and other school professionals often complete internships or student teach in schools with high enrollments of military-connected students and many graduates find employment in these schools.

Those who teach our future educators are willing to learn more about military-connected children. This represents a powerful opportunity to increase the skills of teachers and also the support provided to approximately two million children of military personnel who attend school in the U.S. With more education and greater understanding, we can hopefully begin to narrow the disconnect between the military and civilian cultures within the U.S.

REFERENCES


OVER 80% OF MILITARY DEPENDENT STUDENTS ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS; however, an increasing number of military families living on or around military installations are considering public charter schools as an educational option for their children. The flexible and personalized nature of charter schools can be attractive when parents learn the school(s) to which their children are assigned struggle academically or do not appear to be a good fit for an individual child.

THE NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS HAS BEEN GROWING FOR OVER 25 YEARS. NEARLY 3 MILLION STUDENTS ATTEND MORE THAN 6,800 CHARTER SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS. THIS NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO GROW TO 10 MILLION BY 2030 (WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION, 2017).

In response to a 2013 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on charter schools, the DoD provided a planning guide in 2015 to provide interested parties with the information and resources required to start up and implement a charter school on a military installation. One of the considerations identified in the 2013 GAO report were the variances in state laws authorizing charter schools. Forty-two states and the District of Columbia currently have charter school laws in place. The degree to which each state welcomes charter schools varies widely. Parents must research the availability, enrollment requirements, and academic history of each public charter school in the same manner as traditional public schools.

When exploring the option of charter school enrollment, parents need to know these public schools of choice are required to enroll students using a lottery when interest exceeds available seats. (Since relocations do not always coincide with enrollment lottery timelines, some schools in seven states and the District of Columbia (Illinois, Florida, South Carolina, Maryland, Nevada, South Carolina, and DC), may offer enrollment accommodations for military dependents such as priority enrollment through a weighted lottery or the ability to hold a percentage of seats for the children of parents assigned to a federal military base.) No charter schools, on or off installation, may elect to serve only military dependent students isolating them from their civilian peers.
EIGHT MILITARY INSTALLATIONS CURRENTLY HAVE A CHARTER SCHOOL LOCATED ON BASE. Two additional on-installation charter schools are expected to open by 2019. In D.C., recent policy changes will allow a public charter school in development at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling to hold up to 50% of the seats for military dependent students. In 2016 the Bossier Parish School Board (BSPB), Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, approved the application for a charter school on the base in partnership with the Barksdale Global Power Museum Association. This school will open offering classes for grades K-6 and eventually serve over 800 students in grades K-12. It will be the second public charter school in Louisiana to open on a military installation.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IS UNEVEN NATIONWIDE; consequently, parents who have had this option in one state may not have the same option when relocating. Parents are encouraged to research the educational options available for their children prior to relocating. Just as the quality and opportunities available in traditional public schools vary, each charter school must be evaluated to determine whether or not the educational program will meet the needs of each student. Factors such as transportation, academic performance, personalized learning opportunities, special education, gifted programs, school calendar, and the availability of extra-curricular programs must be weighed heavily to determine if a local charter school is the best educational option for an individual student.

The Sharpe family opted for a charter school for their children when stationed in Yuma, Arizona and experienced disappointment when this option was not available in Virginia. Schools are assigned based on address in Virginia, and only nine charter schools have been authorized. None of these charter schools have been specifically designed to address the needs of military families.

Check out more charter school resources at MilitaryChild.org/library
Recently, Mrs. Sharpe attended a forum in Richmond, Virginia, where the expansion of charter schools was discussed as a strategy to improve the educational opportunities for military-connected students. “We flew out in May to house hunt, attempting housing first (at Quantico). There was zero housing available,” reports Brandy Sharpe, a military spouse and parent. The Quantico DoDEA School does not allow those who live in town to attend their school, and there are no Charter Schools in Stafford County, Virginia. The option of not relocating due to the limited educational options was never on the table. “If one denies orders, it’s a career suicide”, says Brandy. “We purchased a house over our housing allowance rate, in a higher performing school district with better opportunities for children, and have Ramen noodles as a staple meal. These are the facts of our choices. I feel that many do not understand the sacrifices we make for our children’s education.”

PARENTS OF MILITARY DEPENDENT STUDENTS ARE HIGHLY AWARE THAT EDUCATION SYSTEMS VARY WIDELY and that the quality of education options at a new duty station can cause significant stress during a transition. Charter schools, where available, may make a move less stressful when local public schools struggle. Charter schools on military installations lessen apprehension for parents who are deployed and make it easier for the family members left behind according to Terry Snook, who is leading the development of the Barksdale charter school.

Refer to the Education Next chart to see how public schools are being graded in communities and nationwide.

Source | educationnext.org/2017-ednext-poll-interactive
BOB WOODRUFF INSERT
1/2
BOB WOODRUFF INSERT
2/2
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MCEC advocated for the inclusion of the Military Student Identifier (MSI) in public school data reporting systems since the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military-Connected Children was created and seven states added the legislation to their state laws in 2010. By 2016, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had adopted Compact legislation, and DoDEA schools have indicated that they will adhere to Compact principles as well.

Today, while this data element is new to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), collecting and reporting it has already been implemented in 20 states during the past three years without undue expense, time, hardship or controversy.

We see numerous advantages to the use of this data element. Collection is a seamless addition to the school registration process and remains voluntary on the part of parents as they register their children, whether at the beginning of a school year or any time during the year. The advantages of gathering school level military student identifier (MSI) data are similar to gathering information about gifted and talented, bilingual, career and technology students, special education students, etc.... Schools have a more accurate picture of their students and therefore can shape their programs, activities, course offerings, daily schedules, extra-curricular programs and more to meet the needs of their student population. Resources including programs, staff, and budget allocations can all be adjusted to meet the needs of the student body and achieve the goals and objectives set for the school.

Military-connected students come from many different schools, states and sometimes, different countries. Their transcripts and experiences are
different from students who stay in the same community during their K-12 years. Knowing that a school has a significant military population helps school staffs plan accordingly and make appropriate adjustments as noted above.

School staffs regularly look for patterns, advantages and challenges presented by the student groups they serve. They use aggregated or summarized information needed to plan and design programs and course offerings. Personally identifiable information is not reported. Family Education Rights to Privacy (FERPA) rules apply to this information just as they do to other data that schools have regularly collected for many years.

_There are real advantages in schools and school districts using aggregated MSI information to understand and serve their student populations more effectively._ We are hopeful that this new data element will provide more useful programs for students of Active Duty parents as well as for students of parents serving in the Reserves and National Guard. Reserve and National Guard children are often “invisible” as their schools may not know of their parent’s service. Yet these students experience the effects of deployments as often as children whose parents are in the Active Duty forces.

The effects of NG/R deployments on their children comes clearly into focus as hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Marie, and Jose swept through the Gulf of Mexico and devastated several states and Puerto Rico. Following Harvey the governor activated the entire Texas National Guard. Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina and Puerto Rico face the same emergencies and rely on their Guardsman and Reservists as well. It’s not a war zone but we all know that for children and spouses, gone is gone. When schools know their students they can provide support to these families as well.

Schools have a difficult time creating highly effective programs for their students if they don’t know anything about them. This data element provides an excellent opportunity to bring the military student population into clear focus and help them thrive.
By the time Abigail graduated high school she had lived in Colorado, Ohio, Texas, Tennessee, Maryland, Georgia, and Missouri before she hit the road back to Texas after graduation. Her father’s 28-year Army career afforded her and her family many opportunities, experiences, and challenges. “It was one of those things you get used to. I was forced to grow up quicker and prove myself in different sport and school environments,” shared Abigail.

“Moving around was one of the greatest blessings. I learned a lot about who I am, built a strong identity, and learned to overcome obstacles no matter what.”

Abigail’s family lived in Dallas when she was younger, a place that forever held a place in her heart. “Dallas is where I started playing sports like soccer, softball, and basketball. Sports became a foundation for me, something that was consistent no matter where I went,” shared Abigail. Out of all the places she lived, Abigail was devastated when her family left Texas. “I had really good friends there and I never found that again after I moved,” she explained. “When you live here you become a Texan. Dallas was the grassroots of my identity.”

Every person handles transition differently. Similar to Abigail, her brother Anthony was devastated when the family left Missouri. “He made really good friends there just like I had in Dallas,” explained Abigail. “As a military kid, you either get addicted to the move and antsy when you’re in a place too long or prefer to avoid moving when possible. Anthony didn’t like moving. He wanted to stay put.” Although leaving Missouri was hard for Anthony, he persevered and opened up to new experiences in Kentucky and ended up making lifelong friends there.
Abigail’s love of the Lone Star State brought her back after graduation to attend the University of Texas at Austin as a Government and Middle Eastern Studies, Plan II Honors major. A 4.25 GPA, 2100 on the SAT, 33 on the ACT, and a well-rounded list of experiences led Abigail to a top honor, the Forty Acres Scholarship. Pete Geren, former Secretary of the Army, who Abigail met for the first time at the 2017 MCEC National Training Seminar, sponsored the full ride scholarship. The scholarship provided Abigail with a community, a global experience, and professional growth opportunities tailored specifically to her. She also participated in the Archer Fellowship Program, which brings highly motivated and accomplished students to Washington, D.C. for a comprehensive academic and professional experience.

In the spring of 2017, Abigail worked as the Policy and Student Programs Intern at the Military Child Education Coalition editing the legislative guide, assisting with state comprehensive support planning, and supporting student programs during and in preparation for the MCEC National Training Seminar.

To any military kid struggling with transition, Abigail wants them to remember that their experiences teach them so much more than they realize in the moment.

“Even though moving around can be difficult and challenging sometimes, you get to remake yourself everywhere you go,” she shared. “I am confident you will look back and be thankful for the places you have gone, the people you have met, and the experiences you have had.”
SIRENA’S JOURNEY TO SERVICE

Not only does Sirena want to serve her country, but it appears her country wants her to serve too with appointments to attend three United States service academies, the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, an impressive feat. Sirena accepted an offer from the Naval Academy, as she believed they would best prepare her for a career as a combat pilot.

A military child who attended eight schools growing up, Sirena learned early how to handle the social and academic challenges of transition. "I became more social and independent," shared Sirena. "I became accustomed to moving around so much and learned to focus on my academics and goals." She looked to online resources like Tutor.com, free to military families, to help bridge the academic gaps when she transitioned to a new city or country.

One of the most challenging transitions was when Sirena and her family moved to Singapore her freshman year of high school. Her peers were from all over the world including Korea, Russia, and Spain. "I was nervous as it was my first day of high school in a different country," shared Sirena. While she had a list of challenges it ended up being a once in a lifetime experience. "I loved the culture and learning about the traditions." Sirena traveled, volunteered, and explored surrounding cities and countries during her time abroad.

8 schools use resources overseas
National Honor Society
JROTC
Valedictorian
3 academy appointments
The sweet taste of watermelon always reminds me of an Italian soccer pitch. Why? The Army sent my family to a remote area of Italy – 5 hours from any U.S. assets – and my brother and I had to be homeschooled. We spoke no Italian, but I was anxious to find a soccer team. When Mom and I drove up to the soccer field, we watched as girls arrived by car and scooter, but each “girl” was scarier than the last. One was HUGE with tattoos down her arms, a piercing in her nose, and gauges in her ears. It was then that we knew we weren’t in Kansas—or Colorado or Ohio—anymore. Even though the walk to the field was short, it felt like walking toward certain torture. A large, jolly-looking man popped-up and asked my name.

“Genevieve, G-E-N-E-V-I-E-V-E”

“Aww. Ok,” he scribbled something onto some paper, took my hand, and started dragging me toward a huge intimidating field.

As we started to train, I felt crippled by the language barrier. Everyday soccer jargon had become completely foreign to me. I tried to use a few Italian soccer words that I had memorized in preparation for this moment. When asked what position I played, I stuttered before looking at my wrist where I had written the position in Italian. Where my eyes should have met the words “defender centrale,” I just saw a sweat-smudged writing. Panicking, I started throwing hand gestures and little bits of Italian and English together.

“Defender?” One girl asked with a heavy accent.

“Si,” I sighed gratefully.

Beep! The whistle blew and the ball was put into play. It flew up field, cross the goal post, out of bounds, back to the center, and just about everywhere else. These girls were good, really good. The ball came to my feet. I kicked it down field to my teammate. Play went back and forth, but I was able to keep up… and even do well. I’ve got this! I assured myself. The game continued and although the ball didn’t visit me as much as the other girls, when it did, I handled it calmly and played as I had been taught. Finally, the game was over and we all retreated to the smelly locker room to find a giant plate of juicy watermelon waiting to be devoured.

As I sat there munching on watermelon, I thought about how I just played soccer with women a decade older than me in a foreign country. Earlier that day, I had been scared, self-conscious, and unsure of myself. But, walking back to the car, those emotions were gone; now I was a girl who held her head high with confidence and acted as my many military moves have taught me; to adapt and make the most of any and all situations.

Throughout the training, my tears had dried and my fears had faded away—all because I stepped onto that soccer pitch.

Check out the Call for the Arts on page 32 to submit your own art or writing.

When Sirena and her family returned from Singapore, their next stop was Killeen, TX where she participated in the International Baccalaureate (IB) track at her high school. The IB program is intense preparation for college. The academic rigor taught Sirena responsibility and time management. “I believe it’ll help me in college and the academy because I have learned to manage my time and take responsibility for what I have to do, academically and in my community,” shared Sirena. Volunteering is important in the track and allowed Sirena to become more involved in her community, broadening her scope and perspective.

Sirena participated in cross-country, track, the National Honor Society, JROTC, and still managed to be the valedictorian of her class. She shared that the balance is a learned process and anyone who thinks they can’t achieve their goals can if they are willing to put in the work and rigor to succeed.
If you’ve ever wondered what it is like to be a military child, sit down next to one and chat with them about their life experiences. Chances are, these resilient kids will delight you with positive stories of the wonderful locations they have lived and the great friends they made along the way.

The MCEC student program has trained hundreds of high schools (Student 2 Student®) and middle schools (Junior Student 2 Student®), creating active student clubs, increasing awareness of transition challenges, and addressing them positively. While these programs have been in place for many years, the Elementary Student 2 Student (eS2S) program is relatively new and is already thriving and making a huge impact on young children!

This summer, thanks to a generous grant from the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), MCEC trained six elementary schools in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The WWP identified the schools as locations with a high concentration of students dealing with the issues of a wounded warrior in the home. Attendees, consisting of teachers, counselors, administrators and parent volunteers, learned how to identify challenges faced by students as they transition in and out of schools, as well as tools to create a customized school blueprint to tackle key issues. Adult sponsors choose military-connected and civilian students to be ambassadors of their eS2S clubs, as the program emphasizes leadership and service learning. Representative sponsors from each school then attended the MCEC National Training Seminar in Washington, D.C. to enhance training, knowledge, and collaboration.

Thanks to the Wounded Warrior Project, the newly trained eS2S clubs in Colorado Springs are off to a great start. The students are ready to ease the nerves of new students and provide them with friendly faces and welcoming hearts.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT eS2STM PROGRAMS VISIT MILITARYCHILD.ORG

Thank you TO THE WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT
It is so heartbreaking to listen to Bailey as she laments over the fact that her parents are so far away for so long. I usually hear her sad stories after I have had to get on to her for some reason or another. Tonight I told her she had to brush her teeth. She started to fuss and I immediately put a stop to her fussing. She started to cry and said, “But, Nana it is really because I remember talking to my dad tonight and realize that there is no way he will be coming home early and I miss him so much.” Geez, these are tough moments. But, then she runs into her bedroom and starts playing. Bailey is probably the toughest kid I know.

When six-year-old Bailey’s parents both left for 12-13 months with the U.S. Air Force, she moved from New Mexico to Florida to live with her Nana and Papa. Her Nana, Kaye, wanted to make sure her parents kept up with all her milestones (first lost tooth, learning how to ride a bike, learning to tie a shoe, birthdays, Christmas, and all the other missed holidays) so she created a private Facebook page called "Bailey’s 365." She always amazed her with funny statements and stories, which she would share with her parents on the page she created. Kaye called them “Baileyisms.” “Some of them are quite endearing, some are downright hilarious, and some just depict the life of a military child,” explained Kaye. “Our life has been changed forever because of the grandchildren who are left in our care while parents defend our great nation!”

Angela told Bailey she would be home in 4 more months. Bailey said, “Whew, you mean I only have 4 more months of living with these old people?” No ice cream for you tonight Bailey Bug!

We got in the car after picking Angela up at the airport and Bailey proudly proclaimed, “Well I don’t need Nana anymore.” Have you ever felt like chopped liver?

Bailey and I have deep conversations about school, college and saving money for college. When I picked her up from school today, she started laughing and said, “Nana, I can hardly wait until I go to college cause I can stay up all night in my own room and watch movies.” Then she paused in her thoughts. I could see that little brain turning. She then looked up at me and asked, “Wait a minute.......is school part of college??” Haha I said yes she will have school work. I think I burst her bubble. So after she recovered from that revelation, she decided that she will make A’s because an A will get her money for college. Smart thinking.

Bailey has been hounding me for a few days to help her make a sign to welcome mommie home. I have been putting her off because of chores, etc. Finally, she reached her limit and with both hands on her hips, she announced, “Nana, what is more important? Laundry or mommie coming home?”

Bailey told Marv and me that she wasn’t sent to Florida to live, she was sent here to make us happy!
Chet Edwards, a former U.S. Congressman, began his 20-year career as a public servant in 1990 when he was elected to the United States House of Representatives from Texas’ 11th District. His district included Fort Hood, one of the largest military installations in the world. Edwards’ understanding of service members and their families, and his work on their behalf, engendered respect and support from both sides of the aisle, an accomplishment not easily achieved. His legacy of service continues today as the longest serving member of the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) Board of Directors and his support of military families is unwavering.

In anticipation of the MCEC 20th Anniversary, Chet Edwards shared his thoughts on the responsibility our nation has for its military families and the impact policies can have on quality of life issues that can ultimately influence force readiness.

“In wartime, America will always do what is necessary to support our military families, but when major combat winds down, I worry that the focus on those families’ sacrifices and the support that should accompany it will wane,” said Edwards. He continued, “The impact of policy on service members and their families can be dramatic in every way and can encompass issues such as the quality of education their children receive, housing, childcare, level of pay, and deployment decisions.” The lesson, Edwards shared, is that those who care about the military have a responsibility to follow policy and influence it given the opportunity.

“In over two decades in Congress, I never saw a shortage of lobbyists advocating for aircraft, submarines or weapons systems, but I saw few paid lobbyists asking for quality of life improvements,” said Edwards, adding, “without advocates like MCEC, these issues risk being underfunded and it underscores the importance of MCEC taking the lead in fighting for military kids.”

In the 1990s, Edwards helped found the House Military Impact Aid Coalition that was ultimately successful in providing federal funds to schools serving military communities in which federal military installations affected the tax base in those areas. “Impact Aid ensures military kids get the quality education which they richly deserve, and communities get support they need to provide it,” said Edwards.
From 2007-2010, Edwards chaired the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Committee and, with input from military leaders, led efforts to build needed facilities in many communities. “The voices of enlisted leaders and spouses were invaluable in this process. For two years in a row, testimony showed the number one unmet need was childcare facilities…so we worked on that,” said Edwards. He emphasized the role spouses have in advocating for their own and other military families, saying, “I hope military spouses not only understand how much our country respects their sacrifices, but also know how important their voices can be.”

The son of a World War II Navy aviator, Edwards grasps the challenges facing military and veteran-connected children. He continues to work in government relations and as the W.R. Poage Distinguished Chair in Public Service at Baylor University. As a champion of military families and dedicated member of the MCEC Board of Directors, Chet Edwards provides perspective and guidance as the organization moves into its third decade of service to military children.

Learn more about Chet’s support for military kids in his video interview MilitaryChild.org/the-honorable-chet-edwards
ONE of my most treasured childhood memories is that of my sisters and I gathering in my mother’s bedroom as she read aloud to us. She read books like Anne of Green Gables and The Wizard of Oz, books that were above my reading level at the time, full of rich stories that her voice beckoned me into their world. As a registered nurse, I have always been driven to help people become and stay healthy. Studying prevention of chronic illness and maintenance of wellness brought me to resiliency intervention for children. When examining various programs available for resiliency of children, I found that Military Child Education Coalition® Tell Me A Story® (TMAS) resonated with me. The program brings families, children, and communities together with the sharing of stories. TMAS is a program by the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), that their Parent to Parent™ teams have brought to life since 2005. Families learn how to read stories and discuss them so the story relates to their own lives. They use those conversations to help with tough topics, such as deployment, parents coming home changed, or parents not returning at all. The selection of stories in the TMAS curriculum — from Courage, a tale of every day acts of bravery, to Giraffe’s Can’t Dance, a story about learning new things and persevering no matter what others say — offer a beautifully illustrated platform for military children and their families to grow from.

My research focused on how effective TMAS is at promoting resiliency and changing behavior. I attended ten TMAS events in three states, visiting seven military communities, recruiting participants that were attending TMAS, and a comparison group from other Parent to Parent™ workshops and MCEC communications. I followed my study participants for six weeks. With the comparison of those that attended TMAS with those that did not, I was able to see patterns, and truly determine if TMAS is effective.

"Families learn how to read stories and discuss them so the story relates to their own lives. They use those conversations to help with tough topics, such as deployment, parents coming home changed, or parents not returning at all."

I found that how much families consistently used TMAS skills at home led to an increase in their children’s resiliency and a decrease in internalizing and externalizing behavior for those that attended TMAS, compared to those that did not. Male children that attended were more likely to have an increase in resiliency and a decrease in behavior after attending than those that did not. What this research tells us is that Tell Me A Story® does indeed affect children’s levels of resiliency and their internalizing and externalizing behavior in both statistically significant and clinically meaningful ways. In essence, TMAS does what it seeks to do, improving the lives of children. Connections between parents and children through literacy helps them to grow up and reach for their dreams.
Many military children move six to nine times during their K through 12 years, a statistic Manhattan-Ogden USD 382 felt important to address. The Kansas school district wanted to assist military families when transitioning into their schools. With over 40 years of experience as a teacher, counselor, and librarian, Deborah Mohler, STEM Parent Engagement Coordinator, works to ensure military families receive the necessary school information so their children can transition smoothly.

When Deborah came across the Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®) Parent to Parent® Webinars, she instantly connected with them and knew she could share them with parents at her school allowing them to be effectively engaged in their child’s education. “Almost every webinar is beneficial to me,” shared Deborah. “These webinars are essential for me to do my job. I recommend (them) to parents.”

Parent to Parent™ webinars were developed on a range of topics as a resource for military and veteran-connected parents. If participants cannot attend live sessions, the recordings are available instantly online. Free and open to everyone, topics include:

- MIC3 – Know Your Child’s Rights
- Building a College Mindset
- Kindergarten Readiness
- Transition Portfolios
- What to Expect When You’re Accepting
- Preventing the Summer Slide
- Internet Safety
- Resiliency and Bully Proofing
- AND more!

“Knowing and understanding the college and career process can be a confusing process for students and parents,” explained Deborah. “Everyone needs assistance at some time. These webinars provide that assistance in an informational format that all can understand.”

Over 35 years of Deborah’s teaching experience has been with military families in which 70% to 80% of the schools’ population is military-connected. “I have had the rewarding experience of working with our military families each year,” shared Deborah. “Military families exhibit courage, fortitude and resiliency, and are a true inspiration to us all!”

CHECK OUT UPCOMING AND RECORDED WEBINARS
militarychild.org/parents-and-students/webinars

The MCEC Parent to Parent™ program empowers parents to be their child’s strongest advocate on educational and social issues through MCEC Parent Workshops.

To learn more about Parent to Parent™ visit militarychild.org/parents-and-students/programs/parent-to-parent

Don’t miss NTS 2018!
Professional Development TRAINING

The Military Child Education Coalition® has in-person and online trainings coming up! Earn CEUs and address the educational needs of our military and veteran-connected children.

Check out our training calendar MilitaryChild.org/trainings-and-events

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In celebration of our 20th Anniversary and sponsored by Target, the 2017-2018 Call for the Arts campaign will raise visibility of military and veteran-connected children and the sacrifices they experience through the military lifestyle.

VISIT militarychild.org/parents-and-students/programs/the-call-for-the-arts
The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) Military Student Transition Consultant (MSTC) is a professional navigator and advocate for military-connected students and their families as they transition in or out of schools. MSTCs play a pivotal role in establishing collaboration among school systems, education agencies, public and private youth services, community groups, and installation resources.

As a proud United States Air Force Veteran and military spouse, MARK PATTON understands the complexity of being a part of a military family during deployments and transitions. Prior to becoming a MSTC, Mark was a high school counselor and the Senior Aerospace Science Instructor for the Air Force JROTC program at Cumberland County Schools. “My experience with the military, including being a military spouse and my experience as a counselor, enhances my ability to work with military families,” shared Mark. “My decision to retire from the Air Force early was based on my kids and school. I was very aware of the lack of support systems in 1995 so the MSTC position resonated with me.”

As a MSTC, Mark has worked with students facing a variety of concerns and challenges, to include LGBTQ, homelessness, navigating the college application process, and GI Bill benefit questions. “If there is an issue in the media or national research front, we are presented with the challenge which challenges me to work to find the right connection that helps,” explained Mark. “Once the students realize, along with their parents, that we are that extra resource just for them, they really open up.”

Mark finds it fun and rewarding to help students transition into a new school and make connections in a new community. “Working with kids is hands down the best part of working as an MSTC.” Making connections in the community opens many opportunities for the students like interacting with an expert in their anticipated career field. “I like to go out of my way to let them know all of the things that are available to them in the Ft. Bragg/Fayetteville area,” shared Mark. “If this is my final job, it is a great summation of my military and teaching careers. It lets me use my resources to help kids be successful going forward.”

Dalena comes to MCEC with tremendous experience as a military child, spouse, mother, and grandmother. As the Senior Director, Dalena will represent MCEC at the local level cultivating relationships, performing outreach and advocacy efforts, and expanding our philanthropic reach, all in support of our military and veteran-connected children. As a Guard family, Dalena understands that children of the Guard and Reserve face many of the same challenges as children of our Active Duty. Whether in a war zone or most recently with the hurricane relief support, gone is gone. “This is why the Military Student Identifier (MSI) is an important tool for all military children,” expressed Dalena. “No child needs to be invisible as they strive for social and academic success while dealing with the transitions that military life brings.”

For assistance in the DC area contact Dalena at Dalena.Kanouse@MilitaryChild.org

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