



Spouse Education and Career Opportunities

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Spring 2013



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in Hampton, Virginia. Graduating from James Madison University...

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Career Connections

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The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy is directly responsible for programs and policies that support community quality of life for service members and their families worldwide.



YOUR SECO UPDATE: Communicate and Connect

We often hear from military spouses, “I had no idea these services were available!” So this year, we are continuing to expand our communication efforts across the spectrum of our program. We are drawing more attention to your Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program by sharing stories from our MSEP Partners like [MilitaryOneClick Jennifer Pilcher](#). We are growing our network through resources and conversations on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). We are showing the great work that we are doing with military spouses on [Instagram](#) and [Storify](#).

Help us amplify our message by sharing it with those in your life –colleagues at work, family members or friends. The majority of our military families now live outside the gates of military installations, so reaching the community around us is vitally important to ensuring that those who need our services are aware of them.

Whether you are a Partner with the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, an employment service provider on an installation or a military spouse, you can help us spread the word! We want military spouses to visit the [MSEP Career Portal](#) to see the list of 162 MSEP Partners who have committed to hiring military spouses. We want military spouses to talk with a career counselor through [Military OneSource](#) to make sure they are fine-tuning their competitive edge as they search for a career. We want to decrease the 26 percent unemployment rate for military spouses and the 25 percent disparity in wages facing military wives.

Communication and connections were themes we heard at last November’s MSEP Partner meeting, and we are taking them to heart this year. Career opportunities are out there for military spouses if they know where to look and are plugged into the right networks to apply. At the Office of Military Community and Family Policy, we have, with the help of our Partners and service providers, built a network to facilitate these connections. We count on your help to ensure that military spouses know about them.

Thank you for your continued support of military families.

Sincerely,

Meg O’Grady

SECO Program Manager



CAREER EXPLORATION: MSEP Spouse Spotlight

Kate McAleer, Military Spouse and Associate, Booz Allen Hamilton

Kate McAleer was born into an Army family stationed in Stuttgart, Germany. Growing up, she and her family relocated six times, including a second tour in Germany, before settling in Hampton, Virginia.

Graduating from James Madison University with a degree in International Business and Spanish, McAleer moved to the Washington, D.C. area, going to work for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce International Division. She earned her Master's degree in Communications from American University and then joined an education technology company in northern Virginia as the director of communications. Two years later, she started working at Booz Allen on a variety of projects centered on strategic communications and facilitation. Her career was on a great track.

She met her future husband while he was attending the National Defense University. Two and a half years ago, she married and became an Army spouse. One week later, they moved to Korea for a two-year overseas assignment. Their first child was born a little more than a year later.

McAleer's story is unique because she took her Booz Allen job with her when she moved to Korea. She attempted, and accomplished, what every military spouse seeking to build a portable career should do. She promoted her capabilities, negotiated with Booz Allen management and received their commitment to keep her on board before she moved to Korea.

Although Booz Allen is now a Partner with Military Spouse Employment Partnership, McAleer joined the company and moved to Korea before MSEP was created.

Initially, she teleworked for her McLean, Virginia, team but knew Booz Allen had an office on the installation in Korea where she lived. She made it a point to network with the local office staff and when a position opened up, she landed a new Booz Allen assignment supporting Strategic Communication for U.S. Forces Korea. When her family relocated back to the Washington, D.C. area for a Pentagon tour, she was able to continue her career with Booz Allen and is still telecommuting.

McAleer was introduced to MSEP by Lt. Col. Vonette Monteith, who was involved in promoting MSEP in Korea. McAleer is an MSEP champion because she realizes it meets an important need for spouses seeking employment and hoping to build a portable career. She also knows MSEP benefits employers because military spouses are a tremendous, untapped resource for companies, particularly in overseas assignments.

Although more and more spouses are seeking positions through MSEP, McAleer suggests it is critical for spouses to "drive the bus." When asked her advice for other spouses, McAleer shared a few ideas:

"Own your own career. Learn about programs and considerations for military spouses like MSEP and Military Spouse Preference. Determine if your role is portable when you're notified of an upcoming PCS move. If yes, develop and present a plan to management. Sell them on the value of keeping you on staff. It won't work every time or with every company, but don't be afraid to ask. Learn to garner support and promote yourself and your talents."



EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Military Spouse Scholarship Data

Finding ways to help offset the rising costs of education doesn't have to be difficult. There are millions of dollars in scholarships and grants available to military members, veterans and their families. Many spouses make the decision not to apply for scholarships based on misconceptions like too much competition, too hard to find, or too many essays to write. While many scholarships do require a brief essay as part of the application process, many scholarships only require proof of eligibility. The following list of scholarships specifically for military spouses is a good starting point.

Military Spouse Career Advancements Accounts

The [Military Spouse Career Advancements Accounts Program](#) is an employment assistance program. It provides up to \$4,000 of financial assistance to eligible military spouses who are pursuing a license, certification or associate degree in an approved portable career field or occupation. Spouses of service members on active duty (including National Guard and reserves) in pay grades E-1 to E-5, W-1 to W-2, and O-1 to O-2 who can start and complete their coursework while their military sponsor is on Title 10 military orders are eligible for this program.

Stateside Spouse Education Assistance Program

The Stateside [Spouse Education Assistance Program](#) is available through Army Emergency Relief. It is a needs-based education assistance program offering a maximum of \$2,500 per academic year to help with the educational requirements for occupational opportunities. Spouses of active duty Army soldiers and widows or widowers of Army soldiers who died while on active duty are eligible for this assistance program.

General George S. Brown Spouse Tuition Assistance Program

The [General George S. Brown Spouse Tuition Assistance Program](#) is available through the Air Force Aid Society. It is geared toward providing partial tuition assistance at a rate of 50 percent of outstanding tuition charges per course and a maximum of \$1,500 per academic year. Spouses of active duty airmen or officers who have accompanied their service member to an overseas duty location and are attending a college program are eligible for this tuition assistance program.

Spouse Tuition Aid Program

[Spouse Tuition Aid Program](#) is offered through The Navy Marine Corps Relief Society and provides financial assistance to spouses studying for a vocational certificate, undergraduate or graduate degree. This program grants up to \$300 per semester or \$1,500 per year for undergraduate level studies and \$350 per semester or \$1,750 per year for graduate level studies. Spouses of active duty service members who have accompanied their service member to an overseas duty location are eligible for this tuition aid program.

For help finding scholarships that meet your unique qualifications as a military spouse, please visit [Peterson's DoD MWR Library](#) or contact your [SECO Career Counselor](#) by calling 800-342-9647.



EMPLOYMENT READINESS: MSEP Partner Feature: Safeway

Safeway, one of the largest food and drug retailers in North America, became an MSEP Partner in May 2012. Safeway operates more than 1,600 grocery stores in the Western, Southwestern, and Rocky Mountain, Mid-Atlantic regions of the U.S. and in western Canada supported by an extensive network of distribution, manufacturing and food processing facilities. To support

these operations, Safeway requires a large employment base and can offer a range of career opportunities to military spouses such as:

- Retail stores
- Grocery delivery services
- Manufacturing plants and distribution
- Pharmacies
- Corporate and division offices

Safeway supports veterans seeking job opportunities and finds it equally important to support the career efforts of military spouses. And, Safeway values the win-win situation that MSEP provides them – a chance to employ dedicated and talented employees, as well as the opportunity to support service members and their families with portable career opportunities.

Beyond career portability, Safeway also offers flexible work schedules, exceptional training programs and numerous advancement opportunities, all in an environment where everyone's contributions matter. Employees are able to strengthen their skill sets and develop as individuals within the company.

Being an MSEP Partner has been beneficial for Safeway. Megan Vincent, Director of HR Strategic Initiatives and Metrics, shared some of the reasons why Safeway values being an MSEP Partner.

“The partnership not only supplies the company with a great pool of talent for their open positions and an easy way to advertise positions, it also provides excellent support staff to ensure a high level of visibility to military spouses. Safeway's commitment to hiring military spouses is the right thing to do to support the country and communities they serve.”

Spouses interested in pursuing a career with Safeway can view current opportunities through the [MSEP Career Portal](#).



CAREER CONNECTIONS: **Spouse Employment and Career Opportunities Counselors**

What jobs are right for me? What education options do I have? If you have these questions, consider contacting an expert to help point you in the right direction.

Team up with a SECO counselor as you explore career opportunities or evaluate education alternatives and discover how easy it is to get answers, locate resources and resolve issues.

SECO career counselors are problem solvers. Counselors focus on providing military spouses with the support and information they need to achieve their career goals and aspirations. Counselors are a phone call away and can provide help with the following:

- Assistance finding funding for education
- Help with locating the right school/program
- Advice on balancing work and family life
- Assistance with resumes, interview skills and more
- Guidance in choosing child care options
- Support in determining a portable career path

SECO counselors are highly qualified to assist military spouses of all ages and backgrounds. Counselors have a background in education, employment, or both, and are experienced in advising adults of all ages about education, employment and career options. SECO counselors are master's level subject-matter experts and certified professional counselors. They are dedicated to helping military spouses overcome obstacles and find solutions.

SECO counselors recognize the challenges facing military spouses as they relocate or navigate the ups and downs of military life. They understand spouses may need information and guidance during transitions – both personal and professional. Bouncing ideas off a counselor or getting assistance in cutting through red tape can save time and eliminate frustration for spouses. Working with counselors may help spouses consider a wider range of alternatives or increase their confidence in making career or education choices.

Three of the most common concerns spouses share with SECO counselors are:

- I don't have the money I need to do what I want to do.
- I don't have a clear direction on where I want to go.
- I don't know how to find what I'm looking for.

SECO counselors help spouses find answers to these and a host of other concerns. Their guidance and support can assist spouses in locating resources, determining a clear direction and discovering ways to best use their talents.

Nate Taylor, MBA and SECO Counseling Services Lead, has several suggestions to offer military spouses:

- Educate yourself and become a life-long learner.
- Be the best at researching and finding knowledge.
- Believe in yourself and set your sights high.
- Use available resources like SECO, Military OneSource and the Military Spouse Employment Partnership to ease your struggle and alleviate unnecessary stress.

Military spouses seeking information or personalized assistance with employment or education opportunities should visit the [Military OneSource/SECO](#) page or call 800-342-9647 to talk with an education or career counselor. Counselors are available from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday-Friday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday.



TOOLS & RESOURCES: Blue Star Spouse Networks

Military Spouse Employment Partnership member Blue Star Families launched a new resource and networking initiative earlier this year. The Blue Star Spouse Networks, created in conjunction with [Hiring Our Heroes](#), are a place for all military spouse professionals to share professional information, network and find information on state licensing requirements across the country. Current networks include Blue Star Educators, Blue Star Health Care Professionals and Blue Star Entrepreneurs. The Blue Star Spouse Networks will work in conjunction with the private sector, the Department of Defense, and state and regional stakeholders to shape the future of professional military spouses. [Click here](#) for more information.

Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program

Spouses can contact the [SECO Career Center](#) for personalized assistance with their education and career goals. Spouses are able to gain assistance from master's level consultants, who are trained experts in the career counseling field, and schedule an in-depth specialty consultation. These professional counselors are available to help spouses plan for and obtain a portable career. Counselors can help in determining the most appropriate career path for spouses who are unsure of their career objectives.

The SECO Career Center can assist spouses seeking to further their education to reach their career goals by helping them find the right education program. If financing education is a concern, counselors can review various sources of financial aid to determine which source is most suitable. Military spouses may be eligible for financial assistance through Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts. The SECO Career Center's goal is to help spouses learn – advance – succeed.

Military spouses can reach a SECO counselor by calling 800-342-6947.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know the Bureau of Labor Statistics can tell you where the jobs are? The fastest growing occupation is personal care aides. Registered nurses and retail salespersons are projected to have the highest number of new jobs. Find out about education requirements for careers or where the jobs of tomorrow will be by visiting the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) website.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Fairs

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes career fairs and events are open to all military job seekers and their spouses. Each of these events is a great opportunity for employers to connect with high caliber candidates. Visit the [Hiring Our Heroes](#) website for the latest information and a complete listing of career fairs. Make sure to find the fairs and events that are designed especially for military spouses such as the ones listed below!

APRIL 10, 2013

U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo.
(Networking Event)

APRIL 11, 2013

Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

APRIL 24, 2013

Fort Stewart, Ga.

MAY 7, 2013

Camp Pendleton, Calif.

MAY 22, 2013

Fort Benning, Ga.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2013

Quantico, Va.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

NOVEMBER 6, 2013

Fort Bragg, N.C.



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