



Spouse Education and Career Opportunities – SECO

Newsletter

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Winter 2012



Career Exploration

Today's military spouses have a unique combination of skills and experience that make them an asset to employers. But sometimes military spouses need support when identifying the right career to suit both their interests and the realities of military life...

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Education and Training

This is the first in what will be an ongoing series featuring best practices from Military Spouse Employment Partnership partners. To begin the series, we talked with Lloyd D. Songne, Jr., the Director of Military Programs for Volt Workforce Solutions...

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Employment Readiness

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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: Supporting Military Spouses

On behalf of the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the entire Department of Defense (DoD), I want to welcome you to the first quarterly newsletter for the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program! DoD is dedicated to making a difference in the quality of life of our military families. A key component of this support involves your efforts with military spouses. Whether you educate, train or hire military spouses, your role is critical to the overall well-being of the military family. It is all about building networks of support, not only among our military spouses, but also with those who work with military families every day. Without you, we cannot accomplish our mission. As such, we want our SECO program to provide you with the resources to support your networking needs. This quarterly newsletter is one avenue we will use to reach out to you with news and updates about military spouse education and careers. I look forward to seeing many of you at the November Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) Partner Meeting and Induction ceremony!

Thank you for all you do.

Mr. Charles E. Milam
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Military Community and Family Policy)

Looking Forward

It has been a busy year for the SECO team! Since our MSEP Partner Meeting and Induction Ceremony in May, we have been incorporating the feedback we received into the developing MSEP program. We look forward to meeting with our partners again in November and sharing updates including the creation of the MSEP Partner Directory, the MSEP Partner Recognition Program and the MSEP Regional Program.

As we grow as a program, we have continued to grow as a staff. Our DoD SECO team is here to support our MSEP partners, military service providers and, of course, military spouses. I hope you will get to know our team as we continue to work together to serve military spouses. When you see them at the November MSEP Partner Meeting, please say hello to Randy Eltringham, Mininia Hawkins, Lee McMahon and Pia Rose.

I would like to take a moment to outline SECO's services to you. Whether you are an MSEP partner, a school representative participating in the My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship or a service provider at a local military installation, we think it will be of value to you to understand the full range of services and support offered by SECO. Once you understand the continuum of support we offer, we hope you will help us promote these services to military spouses who may benefit from them.

The SECO Military Spouse Career Center at Military OneSource
www.militaryonesource.mil/seco

- SECO comprehensive counseling service available to ALL military spouses
 - Career Exploration and Discovery – interest, skill and aptitude assessments

- Education, Training and State Licensing/Credentialing Requirements – financial aid information and referral
- Career Readiness – support for building interview skills, drafting resumes, and resources for transportation and child care
- Career Connections – links to MSEP partners and career paths

Military Spouse Employment Partnership

<https://msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil>

- Employment and career partnership connecting military spouses with vetted Fortune 500 PLUS employers – 129 corporate partners
- Partner commitment to increase employment, provide career promotion opportunities and ensure pay equity for military spouses
- Since launch in June 2011 – 500,000+ jobs posted, 30,000+ spouses hired

My Career Advancement Account Scholarship Program

<https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>

- Financial assistance for spouses of service members in pay-grades E1–E5, O1–O2, and W1–W2
- Up to \$4,000 for education, training and licensing or credentialing in a portable career
- FY11 – 38,000 spouses received financial assistance

We are eager to provide you with tools and information that are useful to you. Please let us know what you think of our newsletter. If you are an MSEP partner attending the November Partner Meeting, please share your thoughts with a member of the SECO team at the event.

Future quarterly issues of this newsletter will be posted online.

Thank you for all you do in support of military spouses! You are the foundation of the SECO program.

Sincerely,

Meg O'Grady
SECO Program Manager



CAREER EXPLORATION: **Career Counseling for Military Spouses**

Today's military spouses have a unique combination of skills and experience that make them an asset to employers. But sometimes military spouses need support when identifying the right career to suit both their interests and the realities of military life. That's why DoD established the SECO program. As a comprehensive resource for spouses and for the service providers who support them, SECO helps military spouses explore their options and focus on career goals that meet their needs for portable, long-term employment.

One of the key components of SECO is the free career and education counseling available to military spouses. Military life can be hectic, and the SECO consultants understand this. With one-on-one guidance from SECO consultants, spouses can find out about educational programs, identify careers that will suit their portable military life and target employers who will help them meet their employment aspirations and find a meaningful career – not just a temporary job.

Consultants are available to military spouses six days a week. They take the time to understand the interests, talents and goals of each spouse, helping them

- focus their career options by identifying career interests, aptitudes, skills, knowledge levels and personality type, and matching them to different career areas;
- identify and compare potential schools and select one that provides valuable training and credentials in a field well-suited to their military life;
- identify financial resources that will help them further their education and training in areas that will provide portable career advancement opportunities;
- find information about today's job market and work options such as full-time and part-time work, seasonal work, telecommuting, virtual work, job sharing and own-your-own business opportunities; and
- learn more about federal employment opportunities with an emphasis on Military Spouse Preference, Priority Placement and Special Hiring Authorities.

When military spouses want to learn more about education, training, licensure and employment opportunities, SECO consultants are just a call or a click away. SECO consultants can help guide spouses in career decisions that will prepare them to join the 21st century workforce with the skills, knowledge, credentials and attributes employers are seeking. For more information, visit Military OneSource at www.militaryonesource.mil/seco or call 1-800-342-9647.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Building Relationships as a Best Practice

This is the first in a continuing series featuring best practices from MSEP partners. To begin the series, we talked with Lloyd D. Songne, Jr., the Director of Military Programs for Volt Workforce Solutions. Volt Workforce Solutions joined MSEP during the Induction Ceremony in May 2012. Songne spoke with us about the best practices Volt leverages to reach military spouses.

BEST PRACTICE #1: Appoint dedicated and committed personnel to work your military program.

After being with Volt for 23 years, Songne asked to take on the role of Director of Military Programs in fall 2011. He now leads a team of 16 individuals dedicated to connecting military veterans and spouses with employment across the country. Many members of his team are former military and some were hired immediately upon leaving the service. Accessing the pool of highly qualified active duty members, veterans and military spouses is a full-time job, according to Songne, so dedicated staff is a must.

BEST PRACTICE #2: Build relationships with military communities including local units and family support centers.

Unlike service members leaving the military and looking for employment, military spouses are not going to the transition centers...they are going to the family support centers, according to Songne. "They need to see you on a regular basis, that you are not a flash in the pan or a fad," said Songne. Volt staff spends time briefing senior non-commissioned officers about how the company works with MSEP to support military spouses. According to Songne, reaching this active duty audience is key to demonstrating overall support for the military family, regardless of whether the military member stays in the military or transitions into civilian life.

BEST PRACTICE #3: Be consistent with continuous contact.

While job fairs are a great source for establishing multiple connections at one time, Songne stated that making frequent contact with military units and family support centers allows Volt to make immediate contact with good career candidates regardless of whether a job fair is scheduled.

BEST PRACTICE #4: Identify military spouses on the front end of the application process.

Volt updates the MSEP Career Portal on a daily basis via a feed directly from its site noting current job openings. According to Songne, Volt has also integrated its system with the MSEP Career Portal so military spouses who apply to Volt through the portal are tagged as military spouses.

By leveraging these best practices, Volt reaches its objective of connecting talented members of the military family with top corporations across the country.

"Volt hired four military spouses in San Diego last month," said Songne.



EMPLOYMENT READINESS: **Moving Forward with Hiring Our Heroes**

A room filled with the sounds of vibrant conversations, as people made critical connections and built networks.

That was the scene at a Hiring Our Heroes military spouse hiring fair on Quantico Marine Corps Base earlier this fall and it is becoming a common one at military installations across the country.

"It has exceeded even our lofty expectations," said Laura Dempsey, Director of the Military Spouse Employment Program for the United States Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes.

Hiring Our Heroes is holding 20 military spouse hiring fairs this year and next year promises even more.

"We are going to do 20 more next year and we are expanding to include more mentoring options and networking options as well because the demand is just so huge," Dempsey said.

According to Dempsey, the military spouse hiring fairs have consistently had hundreds of spouses in attendance at each event. Some events even topped one thousand participants!

With the inclusion of partners from MSEP, Dempsey has seen the quality of military spouse hiring fairs grow even more.

“MSEP helps bring the MSEP partners to our fairs so we have always a nice [group] of employers who are not only interested in military spouses but have committed to hiring them,” said Dempsey.

Another aspect that makes the Hiring Our Heroes military spouse hiring fairs unique is the education component. “What we try to do at Hiring Our Heroes is to create an education not just for the job seeker through resumes and interview workshops...but also educating the employer on why a spouse is so resilient. Just because there are gaps on their resume doesn’t mean they are unemployable,” said Noreen O’Neil, Director of Operations for the Military Spouse Business Alliance.

The major challenge for military spouses according to Dempsey and O’Neil is that of networking.

“Spouses’ biggest problem is networking...they have the skills, the talent, the personalities; they don’t have a network because they are constantly the new employee. So what we want to try to do...is help spouses form professional networks,” said Dempsey.

These professional networks will be formed both in-person and online, according to Dempsey.

“We are doing this in two different ways. We like the high touch approach so we are going to start having regular informal networking meetings in the DC metro area and at select locations at our fairs where we put together business leaders, local experts, chamber people, and spouses. Everyone throws in their business cards and we link them all together in one of our online programs,” said Dempsey.

After the success of military spouse hiring fairs in 2012 and the consistent level of demand, the way ahead comes down to one sentence, according to Dempsey.

“We’re not done yet.”

For a list of upcoming United States Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes job fairs, including those specifically focused on military spouses, please visit www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events or <https://msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil>.



CAREER CONNECTIONS: **A Call for Mentors**

If you want to make an individual impact in the lives of military family members, the MilSpouse eMentor Leadership Program may be the opportunity for you. The MilSpouse eMentor Leadership Program connects volunteer mentors with military spouses for career guidance in a dynamic online community. Mentors can be military spouse-friendly employers, career professionals, or more experienced military spouses. There is a need for hundreds more mentors and the MilSpouse eMentor Leadership Program is particularly interested in recruiting MSEP members to participate. By encouraging your employees to become mentors, you are

growing your recruiting team as well because mentors have access to a robust community of military spouse talent.

The following are examples of ways you can help:

- create a profile and post articles, job listings, or sample career tracks that spouses can browse
- volunteer to answer questions about your organization or industry via the Q&A feature or in online group discussions
- make yourself available as a one-on-one mentor through a volunteer matching process, which is controlled entirely by the participants (not by eMentor staff) and completely optional

Volunteer mentors need not have any military affiliation. Volunteer today to help a military spouse become a valued, long-term employee in a military spouse-friendly organization. To learn more about becoming a mentor, visit www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Military Spouse Employment Partnership Online Toolkit

MSEP partners now have access to an online toolkit available through the MSEP Career Portal at <https://msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil/page/partner-resources>! The toolkit is an amazing resource for anyone who wants to learn more about MSEP benefits and tools, including those who may be interested in becoming new MSEP partners.

As a current or potential MSEP partner, the toolkit can help you learn more about

- completing the MSEP application and registration process;
- mentoring new partners;
- completing an online profile; and
- posting job openings.

You'll also find an FAQ section, fact sheets, talking points for current MSEP partners, and links to other resources and tools. You can use the resources in the toolkit to train staff on the MSEP program or help others learn more about the partnership.

Visit the toolkit today and check back regularly as we add more resources and information for our current and potential partners!

MSEP Partner Directory

We know that our partners want an easy way to connect with each other and to share best practices for the MSEP program. With that in mind, we have created the MSEP Partner Directory. The new MSEP Partner Directory is a great networking tool, offering contact information to other business partners within your region and around the world. You will have the opportunity to validate your information in the MSEP Partner Directory at the November meeting prior to publishing.



DID YOU KNOW?

Since its launch in June 2011, the MSEP Partnership has grown to more than 120 new partners! At the New Partner Induction Ceremony on November 14, approximately 30 partners will be added to the list. Each of these organizations now has access to a pool of highly qualified and motivated job applicants. And, with more than 30,000 spouses hired since the MSEP launch, the system is working. That's great news for the military community and for MSEP partners!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Military Spouse Employment Partnership

NOVEMBER 14, 2012

MSEP New Partner Induction Ceremony
Washington Navy Yard, Washington DC
Approximately 30 new companies will join the 129 partners who have pledged to recruit, hire, promote, and retain military spouses.

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2012

MSEP Partner Meeting
Hilton Mark Center, Alexandria, VA
MSEP partners will have the opportunity to learn more about the partnership and participate in networking sessions on topics such as marketing and communication.

Hiring Our Heroes Job Fairs

Hiring Our Heroes events are presented by the United States Chamber of Commerce and veteran recruiting partner RecruitMilitary. Because they 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 MSEP Career Portal at <https://msejobs.militaryonesource.mil/event> to learn more and to find out about career fairs specific to military spouses.

NOVEMBER 15, 2012

Veterans and Military Spouses
Charlotte Motor Speedway, Charlotte, NC

NOVEMBER 15, 2012

Veterans and Military Spouses
Irving Convention Center, Irving, TX

NOVEMBER 27, 2012

Military Spouse Event
Fort Polk, LA

NOVEMBER 29, 2012

Veterans and Military Spouses
Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Las Vegas, NV

NOVEMBER 29, 2012

Veterans and Military Spouses
O.co Coliseum, Oakland, CA

DECEMBER 4, 2012

Military Spouse Event
Fort Bliss, TX

