

Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Meg O'Grady, Military Spouse Employment Program Manager; Ms. Andra Hall, and Laura Dempsey, Military Spouse Employment Program Director  
Subject: Military Spouse Employment Programs; Hiring Heroes Career Fairs  
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LIEUTENANT TIFFANI WALKER (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): OK everyone, it's a minute past 1:00. We're going to go ahead and get started.

Hello, everyone. I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday, July 17, 2012. My name is Lieutenant Tiffani Walker, with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I will be moderating our call today.

Today we are honored to have as our guest Ms. Meg O'Grady from the Military Spouse Employment program -- she's the manager there -- and Laura Dempsey, director of Military Spouse Employment programs for Hiring our Heroes, a Chamber of Commerce initiative. And they will discuss along with Ms. Andrea Hall from CSC, the upcoming Hiring our Heroes events on military installations. Specifically the career forum that's going on near Joint Base Lewis-McChord on July 24<sup>th</sup> and the wide range of other career opportunities that are available through the Military Spouse Employment Partnership or MSEP.

A note to our bloggers on the line today -- please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question, respect our guests' time and keep your questions succinct and to the point.

Now I'll take an opening statement from Ms. O'Grady. Ma'am?

**MEG O'GRADY:** Good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us today. We are thrilled to be able to talk to you about the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, particularly our partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in the Hiring our Heroes military spouse career hiring fairs and career forums. I'm also pleased to talk about the comprehensive services that we are offering through the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program of which MSEP is a part.

And just for all of you to know, we are offering comprehensive services for military spouses from career exploration to education counseling, licensing credentials, leading up to those wonderful opportunities that we're offering to the Military Spouse Employment Partnership and our 129 partners. So thank you very much for joining us today.

**LT. WALKER:** Thanks, Ms. O'Grady.

Ms. Dempsey, do you have anything?

**LAURA DEMPSEY:** Sure. So I represent Hiring our Heroes and the Military Spouse Business Alliance, which is a coalition of 10 of the top nonprofits in the country working on military spouse employment in partnership with the U.S. Chamber, several of which are on this call, including NMFA and Blue Star Families.

And while we offer a range of services, I am pleased today to be talking about our hiring fair and career forums. Our next one is going to be at Joint Base Lewis-McChord on July 24th. It's for military spouses. Our military spouse fair career forums are always geared toward military spouses, including an offering of several MSEP employers and MSEP display. We have career presentations and workshops that are geared specifically towards the challenges that military spouses face to help them with their resume and networking skills and interview skills, kind of turn volunteerism into resume bullet points.

Basically, their hiring fair is a little bit different. So we try to gear them specifically toward the kinds of challenges that spouses face, and I'm happy to talk about this one or any other one that's on our schedule today. So thank you for having me.

**LT. WALKER:** Ms. Andrea Hall of Computer Sciences Corporation -- CSC is currently one of the -- one of America's top 10 military spouse-friendly employers. That's from MilSpouse Magazine. She is a retired Army combat veteran and military spouse of more than 20 years of active and reserve service. CSC is looking to recruit military spouses through their military program; available at [www.csc.com/militaryprograms](http://www.csc.com/militaryprograms).

Now I'm going to open up the floor to bloggers, but first I'd like to check in and see if any other bloggers joined the call. I've got Dale, Michele, Amy, Vivian, Joyce, sp. Anybody else? OK, we'll go ahead and we'll start in the order in which you appeared on the line. We'll start with Mr. Dale Kissinger. Dale, the floor is yours.

**Q:** Good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to speak to us. I'm a retired Air Force guy and moved my wonderful spouse 18 times. And she was a teacher. And one of the challenges everybody has is the licensing, which is wonderful that it's being addressed. I did notice when I went to Hiring our Heroes event that they were all over the country. Are the spouse employment programs tied in with them now too? Are they going to be combined? Is there going to be specific recruiters at those events for military spouses and veteran spouses as well?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Yes. So Hiring our Heroes started in March of 2011 by Kevin Schmiegel, who's a retired Marine -- and set a goal of a hundred hiring fairs in a year, which he hit. In the

middle of that, he realized that he wasn't getting a lot of spouse turnout, and the employers weren't hiring spouses when they did turn out. So they decided to set up an entirely different integrated but stand-alone program for spouses.

And part of what we do is 20 hiring fairs for military spouses on or near installations between March of 2011 -- I'm sorry, March of 2012 and next March of 2013. So that's our goal. We're on track to hit it, and we both look for employers that are geared toward military spouses.

We work closely with MSEP to try to get as many MSEP employers at every fair as we can, including CSC, Verizon, Lowe's. We have a lot of -- I mean, really all 130 or so MSEP partners are invited to all of our fairs. And the career forums are sort of geared toward those problems that spouses have. So they talk about how to build a resume, build a network, sell yourself, even though you may have these challenges like the licensing challenges, the mobility -- all the things that we know come with being a military spouse. So they're hiring fairs, but they are very much focused on spouses.

**Q:** OK, tell me how many companies will be at Lewis-McChord for that particular fair as a follow-up. Thank you.

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Yes, I can tell you -- hold on, I'll upload it right now. I think -- I know that we're maxed out. So it really -- when we max out it really just depends on how many -- how many we have room for, and it looks like we have about 49 at Joint Base Lewis- McChord.

**Q:** Thank you very much.

**MS. O'GRADY:** Sir, wait. And this is Meg. We have Andrea Hall on the line. Andrea, would you mind just sharing your perspective as an employer attending the Hiring our Heroes fairs?

**ANDREA HALL:** Sure, I'd be glad to. CSC, Computer Sciences Corporation, has been involved in the Hiring Heroes career events since they were initiated. And I can tell you they are the best events for us to attend. They are either on or close to the military installations. We can reach out to our veterans, our Guard and Reserve members, our military spouses and our wounded warriors in those communities.

I know that currently we are registered to attend four upcoming Hiring Heroes career fairs in Fredericksburg and Quantico and in Springfield. I'm registering today for the military spouse event in Hampton Roads, until August. But we do all types of career events, and we additionally reach out across Europe and do Department of Defense and military community services events because we are a global corporation and we're looking to hire spouses, both -- you know, not just here in the United States but around the globe. Thanks.

**LT. WALKER:** OK, appreciate your questions and answers.

Michele, you're up next.

**Q:** Hi. I would be interested in finding out -- comparable to what Dale had just asked about -- Illinois is one of the states that just recently signed on to do the employment for the military spouses where they can do the initiative state-to-state, relieve a lot of -- take their duties and what they currently have already and eliminate some of the interim things that they have.

Is Hiring for Heroes going to be incorporating -- that it's not with all of the states, of course -- but is there something that is worked in with the Hiring for Heroes that they can in fact come to you or that you'll have someone there that can assist them in trying to find their governorship and their making sure that their certificates that they have will follow through and that can work in conjunct with the Hiring for Heroes?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Now, are you talking about for the veterans or the spouses?

**Q:** Well, either/or. I mean, it all -- military spouse is a -- you know, military spouse. So whether it be the wife, the husband, whichever it may fall under.

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Well, the challenges are a little different. For veterans transitioning out of the service, they often have credentialing and certification, and the issue is that --

**Q:** Oh, I understand. I see what you're saying. I'm sorry. I misinterpreted what you had mentioned there.

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Yeah --

**Q:** If a husband -- just like Dale's wife -- was a wife that was a teacher, I have several of them here. But again, I'm in Illinois, but I deal with a lot of people in the other states as well, wanting to ensure that they can come in and know that they're currently a teacher in the state of Florida and they're going to be moving -- or know they're going to be moving, say, to Joint McChord --

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Right.

**Q:** If they wanted to come up there, is there someone or will you incorporate that in that area where they can work with someone one-on-one?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** We're working on a couple of things in credentialing and licensing. One of the things that we did this past year was co-host the American Legion Credentialing and Licensing Summit, put all the different parties in a room to talk about this and encourage states to adopt standards that are more friendly to military spouses who are transferring their license.

We also have members of our Military Spouse Business Alliance who are working on this profession by profession. One example is the Military Spouse JD Network. It's a network of military spouse attorneys that are moving from state to state trying to get them to accept provisional licenses or temporary licenses for military spouses, or waive fees. And we've written letters in support of their efforts in different states.

We work closely with the Office of the Secretary of Defense -- Ed Kramer and Marcus Beauregard -- who are working on this to give them information, feedback from what our alliance members and the people who attend our fairs are saying. And we're also working on some programs right now that will give spouses information about -- along with job, you know, job information, will give spouses information about licensing in different states and hopefully linking through MSEP with Ed Kramer and Marcus Beauregard's office so they can access that. It's a little difficult to do that at the hiring fairs because we don't always have local partners who want to come or are willing to work with spouses that way. Always open to it, so if --

(Cross talk.)

**Q:** I would like really like to get one-on-one information with you on that because I would like to participate and assist you if at all possible, especially with the other states that haven't joined in on this --

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Great. I would love that. Thanks.

**Q:** -- to get participation together because it's real important. We just had -- last night our school board meeting just had one that we wanted her to come in. She's brand new moving into the area, but she has that issue. We were able, because I talked with the union director and said, you know -- (inaudible, background noise) -- we can get it through. A lot of people don't really understand how important this is.

**MS. O'GRADY:** Thank you, Michele. This is Meg O'Grady as well -- and we do thank you, Laura, for mentioning Ed and Marcus Beauregard. They are a wonderful team within the military community family policy, and they have a team of state liaisons that are actually regionalized. So we have our state liaison team all over the United States who are working individually with every one of the 50 states to facilitate the transfer of licenser and certification.

And we do have -- our Military OneSource career center counselors are also well-versed as we move forward with this initiative to facilitate the transfer of licenses and certification. You can always get a hold of them by telephone at [militaryonesource.com](http://militaryonesource.com), and they can help individuals navigate that sometimes tricky path through the licensing and certification as they relocate from state to state.

**Q:** Right. To go from place to place and location to location.

**MS. O'GRADY:** Yes. Absolutely

**LT. WALKER:** All right. Thank you very much. Amy, you're up.

**Q:** Hi, yeah. We recently ran a blog post -- I'm sorry; my name's Amy Bushatz; I'm a blogger and managing editor for [spousebuzz.com](http://spousebuzz.com), which is part of [military.com](http://military.com). We recently ran a blog post -- just yesterday actually -- talking about an article put out by [care.com](http://care.com) which while suggests -- saying that military spouses are really horrible when they have degrees -- went on to

suggest 13 jobs that they can have that are basically running errands and babysitting and making gift baskets for people, things along those lines.

And so we wrote a response to that and one of the -- and out of that came something that we consistently hear from our readers, which is, hi, I have an advanced degree and I can't get a job. You know, I'm paying off 40 grand in student loans, except I'm not because I don't have a job.

So can you tell me how many of the people who come to these events, including at Lewis-McChord, will be hiring specifically spouses who have both bachelor's or even advanced degrees? Thank you.

**MS. HALL:** Hi, this is Andrea Hall, from CSC. Could I take a shot at answering that?

**Q:** Sure. Go ahead.

**MS. HALL:** Great. Thank you. We're CSC; we're Computer Sciences Corporation. And I mentioned earlier that we attend many, many of these events. A company like CSC would always look for people with a variety of degrees and credentials. We're constantly looking for people with different IT certificates, folks with their PMP. And the career choices at a company like CSC -- which is similar to many of the other companies that are in the MSEP partnership -- are really limitless. When you deal with a large industry leader like CSC and some of the other partners in the private sector, we allow for really portable career opportunities because it's such a mobile environment.

We have numerous military spouses that have been members of our team for many, many years. In fact, I just did a little snapshot of one of my employees the day before yesterday to do as an employee spotlight -- a young lady who has been with CSC for more than eight years. And in those eight years, she's lived in Germany, Korea, Kenya and the United States. She has her master's degree. She's a retired U.S. service member herself with her PMP, and she manages a portfolio of over \$6 million for CSC as a financial program manager. She is one of probably more than a hundred examples of CSC staff members -- including senior staff members -- that are military spouses.

Her name is Therese, (sp) and Therese, (sp) was hired through what was the ASEP program, is now the MSEP program. And I could name dozens of spouses just like her across CSC that are -- that have higher education and hold positions like program manager, directors. I myself am a senior operations manager, and as mentioned I'm a military spouse and I've worked with CSC for eight years. So we are always looking for those kinds of folks to dispense. Thanks.

**Q:** Can I get an answer from the MSEP people?

**MS. O'GRADY:** Sure. This is Meg O'Grady. We have definitely designed our partnership around the fact that we know that military spouses are highly educated, and in fact more educated than their civilian counterparts. We do know that 84 percent have some college, and 25 percent have a bachelor's degree. We strategically choose our partners based on those demographics.

We have right now over 220,000 jobs that are available on the MSEP portal at [www.msepjobs.com](http://www.msepjobs.com), and we recognize the fact that military spouses are looking for a wide variety of careers. We do offer careers in education and training, health care, business and financial services, information, technology and many others. And we are actually right now -- to address the education piece, we have included in our new partners a higher education coalition that comprises up to 19 different higher education institutions. And so we're able to touch the individual jobs that are offered through those institutions through these types of coalitions.

And we are also looking at partnering right now with professional associations. We're working with a group of military spouses, which I think Laura Dempsey can talk just a little bit about as well, being one of them. But we are talking with some military spouses who are working with us on the transfer of their licensure for the bar, and we're looking at partnering with the American Bar Association so that we can offer jobs in that realm and a number of other professional associations that may have jobs in health care, education and training and information and technology.

Laura, can I turn it over to you for just a minute?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Yeah, sure. So you wanted -- you wanted to know about the hiring fairs as well?

**Q:** Yeah. Yeah, please.

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Yeah, sure. So Hiring our Heroes partners with MSEP, but also, you know, hundreds -- well, we have 3 million members, and every time we have a hiring fair, we coordinate with our some 200 national companies, as well as all of the local chambers within a fifty-mile radius of the fair and invite any employer who wants to hire a military spouse.

So I'm just perusing Joint Base Lewis-McChord right now, and we have everything from Capital One and Xerox to TMX Aerospace and the Port of Seattle. So we really have a very wide range of jobs available, and we really try very hard to make available jobs with all different degrees.

We do require at all of our hiring fairs that any employer have at least five job openings that they post at the fair, that they accept resumes and they'd be willing to interview and hire on the spot if possible. We have very positive feedback about all of these, and so I think that we really do touch on a wide range of careers available for spouses.

**Q:** Can I ask a follow up question, if that's all right? So when I hear -- I mean, I don't think I've ever gotten a comment from somebody who says that they've found the perfect job for them through, you know, whether it be MSEP or -- you know, what I hear is people saying, I don't -- I have a degree and I can't get a job. And then I hear people complain that the jobs that are offered are, you know, telemarketing or transcription or something along those lines. So I'm not saying you guys don't have good jobs. I'm saying that people aren't reporting back -- at least to me -- that they've gotten a good job.

So what do they need to do to change what they're doing so that they can get a job? Like, what's the solution here so that people, you know, so what you guys are doing and working very hard at -- that sounds great -- gets connected with the people who are our readers -- you know, the hundred thousand or so people who are my readers who are reporting back that that hasn't happened for them? Give me some practical steps for these poor people. That's what I'm asking.

**MS. O'GRADY:** Amy, this is Meg O'Grady. And I can absolutely appreciate what you're saying. Having been a military spouse myself for over eighteen years, I can understand -- and we do know the frustration that the population faces. I will say that we are expanding and growing. As you know, we only launched across the services on 29 June of last year.

**MS. O'GRADY:** We built upon a very successful model from the Army. And in that year, we've hired over 27,000 military spouses just through the partnership alone. What I think is very, very important is folks like you coming to these forums so that we can get the word out. We absolutely want to partner with all of the folks out there who have a way to get the message out, and we're working on that every day.

I will again just reemphasize that we do have the Military OneSource Career Center that spouses can use on a regular basis, and we are working very closely with the services on the installation employment services that they provide on installations. So I can feel your frustration, and I hope that as we expand we continue to get the message out. I think a lot of it really is the education and providing the information to spouses so that they can actually take some action on the tools and resources that are available for them.

**Q:** Right, and that's exactly what I'm saying. I'm not saying you guys, you know aren't working your butt off at that. I'm sure you are. I'm saying that the people who are reporting back to me aren't getting what they need, so --

**MS. DEMPSEY:** (Inaudible, cross talk) -- the scale and the depth of the problem is enormous. I mean, the overall unemployment rate for spouses is 26 percent. The wage gap on average is 42 percent -- and that actually is a climbing scale; so the more education a spouse has, the more likely she is to be unemployed or underemployed, and if she is employed to be underpaid. So you know, those spouses who have a degree or an advanced degree are at an even bigger disadvantage than their peers.

**Q:** Right.

**MS. DEMPSEY:** So it's a tremendous problem. We're doing everything we can to attract those employers. And those employers are looking for spouses. You know, we have members come up to us every day at the Chamber of Commerce and say, we want to hire military spouses; we want to find those spouses. So the hiring fairs and working through MSEP -- and we have a new online program called the eMentor Program, where spouses can connect with executives in companies and network. We're hosting networking events along with our hiring fairs with local business and civic leaders.

The eMentor Program -- now some employers are actually starting to use it to post job announcements. Booz Allen just posted some project work on there, for example, for a consultant. Wittenberg Weiner Consulting was one of our partners. And actually, Lauren Weiner (sp) of -- (inaudible) -- one of our alliance members too, are posting opportunities for spouses with professional degrees.

So we're trying. It's just a very difficult population to reach, and they are facing enormous challenges the more education they have. So as an attorney who has taken multiple bar exams to try to keep up with my husband's Army moves over the years, I feel their pain personally. And believe me, I'm doing everything I personally can to try to ameliorate it too.

**Q:** All right, thank you so much for your response.

**LT. WALKER:** Thank you all, ladies. That was a really good discussion. We're going to move on to Vivian right now. Go ahead, Vivian.

**Q:** Hi, this is Dr. Vivian Greentree, with Blue Star Families, and we know that military spouse employment consistently ranks in the top five issues that military families are concerned about from our military family lifestyle surveys. So we're excited to see the resources and the joining together of MSEP and Hiring Our Heroes, you know, kind of joining forces to address this problem which Laura mentioned. The scale and the depth is just so great.

And Laura, you kind of talked a little bit about what I wanted to ask about because we know that mentoring and networking provide intangible benefits. They're very valuable parts of job seeking -- and then once having a job, moving upwards in your field. So could you guys talk a little bit more about how you are integrating this mentoring and the ability to network within your programs and events?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Sure. So we've created in partnership with a nonprofit -- a great nonprofit, one of our alliance partners, Academy Women -- a program called the eMentor network. And what it is is a place where our business partners who are looking to hire military spouses can connect with those spouses. And the nice thing about this network is that it's not sort of a traditional mentoring model. It's more of a networking model. So any spouse can go on there and see -- create a profile and either have the system match you -- or look for, based on key words -- any mentor they want based on geography, industry, whatever, and approach them or join a group discussion or learn about job postings.

And I think it's worked especially well for professional spouses that we were talking about just a minute ago because they can approach an employer and talk about any job postings that might be on there and talk to that employer about what's required and maybe even get to know that employer a little bit before they approach the HR department in that employer.

So another thing we're trying to do is a complement to our partnership with the Center for Women and Business at the Chamber where we host networking and mentoring events for spouses. And it's locally -- at a physical location -- at our hiring fairs. It's a way to sort of take that online. So if you meet somebody and you move, you can still keep in touch, find out what

trainings are available, how you can stay in touch with that company if you move and just get more information in a way that's just much more convenient for people in this day and age when they move around and they don't have a lot of time for a classic mentoring relationship.

**MS. HALL:** Hi, this is Andrea again. I'd like to add what we're doing within MSEP. I can tell you that informally, behind the scenes, some of us MSEP partners are networking and collaborating on our best practices and our lessons learned. Some of us that have been involved in the partnership for a long time are communicating with new partners on our best practices. And we also do some candidate sharing.

So it's not just about hiring, but it's also about retention. So if we have spouses that for whatever reason become at risk, they have to move to a location where the company doesn't have any opportunities for them, we will share those resumes with our colleagues in the MSEP program so that that person doesn't have a break in their employment.

**Q:** I love that.

**MS. O'GRADY:** And this is Meg O'Grady. Thanks both Laura and Andrea. We actually -- we love the mentoring programs that are being developed and certainly are trying to highlight those in the best way through the department as well. We are going to formalize the partner mentoring program within the next six months, before our next MSEP partner induction. And so we're really looking forward to that, and Andrea is going to be instrumental in helping us develop those best practices so that we can implement them into the partnership.

We are always at the Department of Defense looking for ways to strengthen our network -- both for our spouses and for our partners -- and this is one way for us to do this. And now we have just added today you all, bloggers who are joining us today to strengthen the network and get the message out about all of the wonderful initiatives that are going on for military spouses under spouse employment and careers in education.

**LT. WALKER:** Thanks again, ladies. Joyce, you're up.

**Q:** Oh, hi. Joyce Razer, National Military Family Association. We're an MSEP partner. We were one of the first -- or the first nonprofit to become an NSEP partner. We're also staffed by many military spouses. We have many more military spouses as volunteers. So we learn a lot from our staff, we learn a lot from our volunteers, we learn a lot from all the spouses who apply to our scholarship program to try to support their career goals through their education.

And a lot of the issues that have already been raised in the questions today -- I'd like for probably Meg and Laura to talk a little bit about outreach to the nonprofit community as employers, and outreach to real small businesses. And Laura, you know, I love the way that Hiring our Heroes fairs gets those small employers at the various installations. But if you have -- there are a lot of employers who can't meet that threshold of five job openings when your hiring fair has to be in town but still may have one or two jobs for a military spouse if they can make that connection.

So how can the department and all of us work together to reach out to those small businesses and really educate them? We talked a lot about educating military spouses, but how do we educate the business community who hasn't found MSEP yet or who probably won't be recruited as an MSEP member because of the size of their business but who still have jobs? How do we educate them about the value of hiring military spouses and how to connect with potential hires?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** I guess I -- Meg, do you care who goes first?

**MS. O'GRADY:** No. Go ahead Laura.

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Well, the answer to -- I'm glad you asked that, because the answer to the question about small businesses at the hiring fairs is we waive the requirement for small businesses. If there's a small business that wants to hire one military spouse, but they really want to hire a military spouse, we let them in. Our fairs are totally free, so if we have somebody who wants to hire someone, they're allowed to come. They do still have to post the job and, you know, follow all the other rules, but we waiver for them.

And actually, part of what we're doing with these fairs -- there's 20 military spouse fairs, but there's 400 -- we're doing 400 hiring fairs this year. All of them are open to military spouses; it's just the 20 that are focused on spouses. But the purpose of having these and having so many of them is to go out into the communities. Every hiring fair we partner with a local chamber of commerce, the local state workforce people, the local American Legion, the ACAP and ACS Installation Management people. And the purpose of it is really to try to start a conversation about hiring military spouses.

One of the best things about this job is going to the employers after the fairs and ask them what they thought of the spouses and the resumes they saw that day. And they're just blown away. We're busting stereotypes left and right about military spouses just by having the fairs. And so I think just continuing this drum -- this constant drumbeat 400 times over and over across the country is educating even the most rural regions of America, to include my hometown in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, believe it or not, about the value of hiring veterans and spouses. So it really is why the Chamber of Commerce is -- has dedicated so much scale and depth to the events that we've had.

**Q:** And I appreciate that Laura. But we've still -- you know, we still encounter the military spouses who say, I've tried to interview for a job, and as soon as they see that I'm a military spouse, they say, we're not interested. So --

**MS. DEMPSEY:** Oh yeah. The problem persists, and there's still employers who talk to us and candidly will say the same thing. But you know, all we can do is keep getting out there and trying.

**Q:** OK. Meg, what's the DOD's role in this?

**MS. O'GRADY:** Well, thanks, Joyce. Thank you for that question, because we do have a very evolving role as we speak. We have talked about our 129 partners, which do include nonprofits

such as National Military Family Association. And we are looKing at those 129 national partners to access our talented pool of military spouses and to embrace the culture of the military spouse and understand the challenges that they have, not only on that national level but to educate their larger organizations and the organizations in the regions and smaller locations as to what that culture is.

But in addition to that, we do have a regional program that is evolving through MSEP, and we have actually signed on partners in Fort Carson, Colorado. We have a very robust regional program in Fort Carson, Colorado, as well as a program in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We are looKing to strengthen that regional network and bring in more local employers who understand the military spouses that live in that particular area and understand the unique challenges that may be presented to them through that location or that installation, whether it's a high-ops tempo or a certain kind of unit that may be at that installation.

So we are enlarging that regional network over the next five years. We are looKing right now to go to several different areas, installations with high needs, across the United States. And you will see that as we evolve over the next six months for sure, and from six months to two years, that regional network will expand.

**Q:** Great. Keep us posted and let us know how we can help.

**MS. O'GRADY:** Absolutely.

**LT. WALKER:** OK, that was the last of the bloggers that I had. I know there were other bloggers that joined the line. Do any of you have questions? Nope. OK. Dale, do you have another question you'd like to ask before we wrap it up?

**Q:** I do -- one quick one for Meg. One of the challenges my wife had as a military spouse with a teaching degree was the DOD's program trying to get federal civilian employee unions to allow military family members into the DOD's system. Has (Meg ?) addressed this with DOD?

**MS. O'GRADY:** Thanks, Dale. We actually -- we do have an ongoing communication with DODEA on military spouse hires, as well as with Federal Agencies and our own federal agency Department of Defense. There are some significant challenges that we are looKing to mitigate for military spouses -- some of which we already have through legislation in allowing military spouses hiring preference for federal jobs. But it is a challenge that we are looKing at certainly within the United States.

There are some challenges when we looK at the overseas population that deal with the SOFA and some local laws, but that is something that we are addressing within the department and with other federal agencies.

**Q:** OK. Thank you very much, Meg, and best of luck in working that one. By the way, I failed to mention, I'm from militaryavenue.com. So thank you very much for your time.

**LT. WALKER:** Thank you.

**MS. O'GRADY:** Thank you.

**LT. WALKER:** OK, ladies. Thank you all. I appreciate it. We've had some great questions and comments and some good information from different perspectives today. As we need to wrap up today's call, I'd like to ask our guests if they have any final comments. Ladies?

Ms. O'Grady, if you have anything?

**MS. O'GRADY:** I do want to thank you all for participating today and for continuing to engage in the dialogue that is so important for us to continue to serve our military spouses. And for all of you that are veterans and military spouses on the call, I wish to thank you for your service and for the sacrifice that you've made, and we certainly appreciate you joining our network and partnering with us to get the word out to military spouses.

**LT. WALKER:** Laura, anything?

**MS. DEMPSEY:** I guess I'd just like to say, if there's any takeaway that I wish people would have about, not just this call, but what's going on right now, is that military spouse employment really is -- is kind of an exciting place to be right now. You know, as a military spouse who's been trying to get a job for 14 years, it kind of feels like you're always the bridesmaid, never the bride. It's always the issue that's sort of second on everybody's list.

But getting these public-private partnerships that DOD is actually very open to right now are important, because one of the problems spouses continually have is that they're always bombarded with competing interests and different organizations that information is all scattered. And getting organizations, industry leaders like NMFA, like MSEP, like Blue Star families, like the Chamber of Commerce, together with all the smaller ones is very important because it's going to make the information flow a lot easier. And I think that some exciting things could happen if we keep working together.

**LT. WALKER:** All right. Thank you. Andrea? Do you have anything?

**MS. HALL:** Hi; thanks. I just also wanted to thank you all for putting this information out to help communicate and educate both military spouses and those folks that would be hiring or potentially hiring military spouses on, you know, how beneficial these folks are to our organizations. I think that having been partnered with MSEP for so long in my organization, we realize that this is -- from an industry perspective, it's good for business.

We have come to the realization for several of our contracts that military spouses are the most desirable folks that we go after. So we'll go to employment readiness program career fairs and Hiring Heroes career fairs just to fill these specific contracts because they're loOKing specifically for military spouses. And if MSEP didn't exist, I don't know that my company would have made that cultural shift.

And it's to the point where things happen without us really having an impact from the military programs team. I had something roll across my desk today from our VP of HR, approving the

transfer and temporary leave of a military spouse who's relocating with her soldier. And she'll be back to work in 35 days once she's relocated. And those kinds of things would not have happened if MSEP didn't exist and if the communications that you all create didn't exist. So again, thank you.

**LT. WALKER:** OK, ladies. And if you guys would further like to share any other information that goes on, we will develop the blog post that's currently on [www.DODlive.mil](http://www.DODlive.mil). We'll include links to all the articles that the bloggers create from this event so we can link each other up that way. And if you have anything else that you'd like to share, you can always reply to the email to which you RSVP'd.

And thank you all again for coming and for talking today about some of the important questions and answers surrounding military spouse employment. I'd like to remind everybody that you can look at the Hiring Heroes website to check out the event that's specifically on July 24th near the Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Today's program will be available online at [DODlive.mil](http://DODlive.mil), where you'll be able to access a story based on today's call along with source documents such as this audio file and a print transcript.

Again, thank you to everyone on the line for your participation. This concludes today's event. Feel free to disconnect at this time. Goodbye.

**Q:** Thank you.

**Q:** Thank you.

END