

# New Initiatives for Military Spouses

By Judy Konitzer

**M**oving with the military poses inevitable challenges, however with the following programs the military leadership is trying to minimize the stress for spouses.

## Military Spouse Career Advancement Initiative

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao announced the new Military Spouse Career Advancement Initiative during a Nov. 14 kick-off ceremony at the Pentagon with plans to jointly provide military spouses the opportunity to pursue their education and develop the skills needed to successfully enter, navigate, and advance in the workforce.

This two year \$35 million demonstration project began in January and will be offered at 18 military installations in eight states: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, North Carolina and Washington. The Army sites are Fort Benning, Ga., Fort Bragg, N.C., Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Lewis, Wash., and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

“The Department of Defense has long been committed to helping military spouses pursue rewarding careers and removing barriers to employment,” Gates said. “Spouses are called on to pack up and relocate the family often at the cost of their own careers. This makes it difficult to navigate the career licensure and certification requirements that go with most professions.”

The career advancement accounts will target nationally identified high-growth, portable occupations such as education, health care, information technology, financial services and construction trades. It will include costs for tuition, fees, books, equipment, and credentialing and licensing fees required for careers for eligible spouses.

The program will also cover the cost of renewing existing credentials and licenses due to a military move (for example: nursing and teaching certificates). Spouses of active-duty service members grades E1 through E5 and O1 to O3 are eligible to participate; however, they must have a high school or general education diploma.

“The program will give the 77 percent of military spouses who report wanting or needing to work an opportunity to forge careers in fields that provide the most opportunity now and in the future. Workers in these high-demand occupations will be able to pick up and move with their loved ones’ assignments, but still continue building their own careers,” Chao said.

Chao notes the trend is towards a knowledge-based economy, and two-thirds of the new careers will require some post-secondary education or training. At the ceremony, Chao told spouses, “Our military could not do its job without your support. You are mission essential. And that’s what this initiative is all about.”

“We owe it to our brave men and women in uniform to assist their families as they do their job, often thousands of miles from their homes and families and under extremely hazardous conditions,” Gates said. This is another step in fulfilling the Defense Department’s commitment to its ser-



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Seated (l to r): Defense Secretary Robert Gates; Gwen Bates, a military spouse; and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao pose with other military spouses after signing a proclamation for the Military Spouse Career Advancement Initiative to fund career education opportunities for military spouses, Nov. 14, 2007.

vice members and their families.

Military spouses may apply and obtain additional information – including eligibility determination, career and education counseling, and skills assessment available at the state one stop-career centers at the participating installations’ Voluntary Education Centers and on-line at [www.MilSpouse.org](http://www.MilSpouse.org).

## Army Spouse Employment Partnership

Bright Horizons Family Solutions, Kelly Services, RGIS; The TJX Companies, Inc.; and Toys “R” Us, Inc., joined 25 other corporations providing employment opportunities and job stability to military spouses.

The Army Spouse Employment Partnership (ASEP), a mutually beneficial partnership between the Army and corporate America, provides Army spouses the opportunity to continue careers as they move with their active duty service members, and gives employers access to a talented and diverse workforce. ASEP currently serves 95 installations around the world. The Army will continue to support Soldiers and their families, with a goal of expanding ASEP partnerships to 50 companies.

With the launch of the Military Spouse Job Search database, spouses can now search for jobs and submit resumes to the site, and employers can post job vacancies. ASEP partners can mine the resumes and offer employment directly to spouses. By tapping into a diverse and talented labor pool, ASEP partners save on recruitment, training and retention costs, and fulfill a civic duty.

Spouses can view job opportunities and submit their resume at one of two Web sites [www.myarmylifetoo.com](http://www.myarmylifetoo.com) or [www.msjs.org](http://www.msjs.org). The National Military Family Association (NMFA) also provides extensive links to education and job opportunities at [www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org).

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