

The Case for Military Spouse Mentorship

By Joseph Hawthorne
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Last year, Catherine started a new job. It wasn't a full-time position, but after years of unemployment, it was a personal milestone. With five previous PCSes ranging from Germany to Philadelphia, Catherine was finally able to focus on her own career.

Unlike many other job seekers, Catherine is an active duty military spouse. And in the private sector, that's a big challenge.

"As a spouse, with all the moves, the expectations are really, really high that you will run a household, and meet new people, and fill both shoes," Catherine said. "I wanted to work one day, but there was just no way that I thought I could add another level of responsibility."

As time passed and her family grew, Catherine maintained the drive and skills to build a great career. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and had experience leading her local Family Readiness Group. Caroline merely needed the right guidance to propel her career forward. So this past year, she turned to an ACP Mentor.

American Corporate Partners (ACP) is an international nonprofit that provides free, one-on-one career mentorships to post-9/11 service members. In the last ten years, ACP has assisted more than 14,000 veterans with their transitions into the private sector, and last year, ACP expanded its mission.

With the support of PepsiCo and Johnson & Johnson, ACP launched its Active Duty Spouse Mentoring Program in November 2018, aiming to support the yearlong mentorship of 600 active duty spouses in 2019. Now, spouses like Catherine can connect with industry professionals who can help them reach their career goals while still supporting the military career of their partner.

For Catherine, this opportunity has made all the difference in her career progression. "I recognized the need for structure, focus and accountability," she said. "I have four kids, so I don't get any time to myself! It's such a treat to get time concentrated on me. A mentor is dedicated to you and has your best interest in mind."

And for the nearly 600,000 spouses of active duty servicemembers like Catherine, these sacrifices and time constraints are all too familiar. Securing meaningful work comes with barriers, including frequent PCSes, résumé gaps, and a persistent lack of professional development opportunities near bases. As a result, more than 35% of active-duty military spouses consider themselves to be chronically underemployed.

Meaningful employment, then, means balanced employment, where spouses can utilize their education and prior work experience, while spending time with their families. With ACP, active duty military spouses have somewhere to turn for individualized career guidance, whether they are on their first job or their fifth.

ACP Mentorships aim to bridge this gap by providing support on a range of professional development topics, from résumé building, to networking, to small business advice. ACP's Military Spouse Mentoring Program is committed to assisting 1,500 active duty spouses over the next two years. Whether you have recently moved locations, are considering a new career or thinking about starting a business, ACP has volunteer mentors ready to offer assistance. Sign up for a one-on-one mentorship today at www.acp-usa.org.