

Locals learn about educating the military child

By Penny Randall
Staff Writer

On Sept. 29-30, the Military Child Education Coalition facilitated a professional development workshop titled Transition Counselor Institute-Phase One for local educators, military parents, family service providers, and community leaders.

NAS Meridian's School Liaison Officer Cynthia McDonald assisted in the coordination of the two-day event held at the Hilton Garden Inn.

"The goal of the training is to help schools to recognize the challenges of the mobile military child and to develop or to enhance transition support programs for these children," McDonald said.

"On average, children of military personnel change schools at least nine times between kindergarten and 12th grade. Often these moves occur at critical stages in a child's academic career."

NAS Meridian Commanding Officer Capt. Charles Gibson opened the event by speaking to the group about the importance of high quality education in the community and to the ability to attract

military personnel and their families to Meridian.

Other speakers included Billy Burnham, principal of Northeast Lauderdale Middle School and Kimberly Foster-Stubblefield of First Book-East Mississippi.

Local school districts were invited to participate. Representatives from Northeast elementary, middle, and high schools were present.

"I found it to be very stimulating, enlightening, and meaningful," said Charlotte Kimbrough, Northeast Elementary School counselor. "I was aware of the transitional needs of the students that attend my school, but found that this conference reopened my eyes. Sometimes, one can become so busy that important issues of this sort can be set back from view. Children experiencing transitions should be monitored to ensure their success. My school will be more aware, alert, and involved from this day forward."

Other schools include West Lauderdale Elementary School and St. Patrick's Catholic School.

Organizations include the Mississippi State University Extension Service (Kemper County Health Agent), NAS Meridian's Child and Youth Programs Director and Training and Curriculum Specialist, a representative from the base chapel and several military parents.

"I thought the training was very useful," said Josephine Tate, Mississippi State University Extension Service Health Agent for the Kemper County.

"I probably knew less than anyone there about the military child's special educational needs. I want so much to be able to contribute to the process of helping these children meet their special needs."

All participants received a tote-bag filled with books, a DVD, and a variety of professional resources. Attendees who completed at least 95 percent of the training were awarded a certificate of completion for the training. Meals and training materials were funded by the Navy.

"This workshop was very educational," said McDonald. "I must say thank you to MCEC and to all the participants who made this training a success."