Quick hire of military spouses now possible

By George Markfelder, DON Civilian Human Resources

It is now easier for certain spouses of active duty Sailors and Marines to be hired by the federal government.

New Department of Defense hiring authorities took effect this fall, and the Office of Personal Management (OPM) issued final regulatory guidelines in the Federal Register under the title, "Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Military Spouses."

"This is a super opportunity for certain spouses of active duty military members to serve their country directly, and to begin a great career with worldwide assignment opportunities," said Shirley Scott, director of Human Resources Policy and Program Department at the Department of the Navy (DON) Office of Civilian Human Resources.

Scott explained that the eligibility for this noncompetitive hiring authority falls into four major categories: (1) A spouse of a military service member serving on active duty (not for training) for more than 180 days, provided the spouse relocates to the member's new permanent duty station; (2) A spouse of a military service member who is retired from active duty with a documented service-connected disability rating of 100 percent; (3) A spouse of a military service member who retired, was released or discharged from active duty and has a disability rating of 100 percent as documented by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or (4) A spouse of a military service member killed while on active duty. In the latter case, the spouse must be the un-married widow/widower of the deceased service member to meet eligibility.

"When service members have a permanent change of station and the family moves, the spouse is typically forced to find a new employer at that new location," said Scott. "Allowing military spouses to at least compete for jobs that would otherwise only be open to current civilians or veterans provides us with a greater pool of potential candidates. It is a win-win for us all."

Contact CNFJ Human Resources Office for more information.

Command ship *Blue Ridge* arrives in Singapore

By *USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs

USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) arrived in Singapore Oct. 29 for a scheduled port visit as part of the ship's fall 2009 deployment.

The approximately 1,000 crew members of the 7th Fleet flagship and embarked staff will have the opportunity to enjoy visiting one of the world's most vibrant city-states, while fostering friendship and cultural relations.

"Singapore and the United States have a long history of working together in this region, and this port visit gives us the opportunity to build on that excellent relationship," said *Blue Ridge* Commanding Officer Capt. Thom W. Burke. "The crew is looking forward to experiencing the hospitality and culture."

While in Singapore, the crew of *Blue Ridge* and embarked 7th Fleet staff will see the island during scheduled tours and participate in several community outreach projects.

"*Blue Ridge* has been here several times in recent years," Burke said. "Our visits to Singapore have always been a great way to show the relationship that exists between the U.S. Navy and this great city."

Blue Ridge departed its forward-deployed home of Yokosuka, Japan, Sept. 2 for a fall deployment to further positive relations with regional partners. The ship has made port visits in Guam, New Caledonia, Sydney and Cairns, Australia, and Port Kelang, Malaysia.

Blue Ridge serves under Commander Expeditionary Strike Group 7/Task Force 76, the Navy's only forward-deployed amphibious force. *Blue Ridge* is the flagship for Commander 7th Fleet. Task Force 76 is headquartered at White Beach Naval Facility, Okinawa, Japan.

CT1 Marvin Jefferson, assigned to the 7th Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), hands out toys to children at the Praise Emmanuel Children's Home in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, during a community service project Oct. 27. *Blue Ridge* and embarked 7th Fleet staff will conduct several community service projects during their port visit in Singapore.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Matthew D. Jordan

Don't miss out on Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits transferability

By MC1(AW) LaTunya Howard, Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

According to an online poll conducted by Navy Personnel Command, Sailors still don't quite understand how the Post-9/11 GI Bill transferability option works.

Of the Sailors who responded, 62 percent thought they could wait until after retirement to transfer benefits to their children.

"Based on the calls that we're receiving, we're worried that the perception is out there that you can wait until you retire to transfer your benefits and that's not the case," says Kathy Wardlaw, Navy active duty GI Bill program manager. "You have to do it before you leave the armed forces."

Sailors with 90 days of active duty service after Sept. 11, 2001, have earned education benefits under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, with no buy-in costs. This benefit can now be transferred to family members shown in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.

The first thing Sailors can do is read NAVADMIN 203/09, which provides the requirements for transferring Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

"Normally an enlisted member needs to check with their career counselor because there will be an obligation required," said Wardlaw. "Sailors will need to obtain the obligation through either reenlistment or extension. Officers can sign a Page 13, and they need to see their administrative officer to do that."

Sailors need to ensure that their obligated service is reflected in their electronic service record before their request for transferability will be processed. A four-year obligation is required for the transferability option.

Since July 2009, 12,000 Sailors have taken advantage of this relatively new education benefit option. This is below the estimated 15,000 the Navy GI Bill office expected.

"I have a 19-year-old currently attending Mississippi State University," said Navy Reservist Vicky Gallagher. "It's an out-of-state college, and it's expensive to pay that bill as a single parent on one income. With tuition, books and housing, I'm saving nearly $12,000 annually. This money is going to help me quite a bit."

Read NAVADMIN 203/09 or visit the Web site www.gibill.va.gov for more information about the Post 9/11 GI Bill or GI Bill transferability options.