

## **Joint Services Teen Council Gathers for Summit in DC**

*By Chet Curtis, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness*

The Joint Services Teen Council gathered in Washington, D.C., in June for the first time since 2014. The Joint Services Teen Council, an initiative from the Office of the Secretary of Defense Military Community and Family Policy, brought together high-achieving youths from across the services to identify and address issues affecting military-connected youths worldwide.

The JSTC provides a platform for military-connected teens to address concerns and find solutions that benefit the entire military community.

“Teens have an opportunity to engage with senior DOD leaders, collaborate and develop teen-led initiatives,” said Tamra De Benedetto, an Action Officer with the Army’s Child, Youth and School Services Division.

This DOD-funded event organized by the MC&FP Office of Children and Youth covers travel, lodging and program costs for youths, chaperones and youth program managers.

The JSTC Summit represents a critical component of MC&FP commitment to supporting military Families, according to De Benedetto.

“The JSTC summit is an investment in the well-being of our military-connected teens and the future of DOD,” she said.

“By empowering teens to become active participants in shaping their communities, the JSTC strengthens the overall resilience and readiness of the force.”

The 18 members of the JSTC represent each military service. Representation is based on the size of the respective military service. This newly formed council included teens selected from Installation Management Command’s Installation Directorates representing sustainment, training and readiness and from two geographical regions, Pacific and Europe.

Teen council members are selected to represent the diverse population of military teens, considering factors such as grade level, extracurricular interests, Family composition (e.g., single-parent, dual-military), length of time at current installation and type of installation (e.g., overseas, CONUS large, CONUS small). This ensures a variety of perspectives and experiences are incorporated into council discussions and recommendations.

“The teens were here for an entire week, undergoing field trips, touring the Pentagon and laying a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery,” said De Benedetto.

The teens briefed senior DOD leaders at the Pentagon on selected issues, the affected audience, scope of the issue and recommend solutions. The group participated in workshops and training to develop leadership, problem-solving and communication skills.

JSTC members will present their findings and recommendations to their Military Service Teen Council and installation and Child and Youth program leadership to initiate solutions.

“This first-time event is a direct result of the innovative work of our Child and Youth Services team and highlights the exceptional potential within our Army youth programs,” said Donna Garfield, Chief of the Army’s CYSS division.

“The Joint Services Teen Council serves as a vital link between teens and DOD leadership, ensuring youth concerns are heard, accomplishments are recognized and ideas contribute to positive change,” said De Benedetto.

Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Perry, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 said, “We need young men and women like these to provide our society the foundation for what our nation is to become.