WHAT WE KNOW:

Teens of active duty military families move, on average, once every three years.

Military teens have difficulty making social adjustments when they move.

Because of these social difficulties, military teens can struggle academically as well as socially.

There is a lack of programs specifically for military teens to build the strong social networks necessary to confront these enormous challenges.

WHAT I AM DOING ABOUT IT:

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Introduction:

The purpose of this booklet is to share a project I have been developing to help address the issues listed on the previous spread, and to ask for your help in the final phases of research and development. My goal is to set up meetings with different on-base school administrators and teenage students in order to gain valuable insights into the life of a military teen in 2004. I would also like to test my system with some volunteer students as a prototype model for analysis and further development.
9 schools
8 homes
2 branches of the service
I wasn’t alone: PCS moves among all Army Children within the past 3 years (permanent change of station)

- 75.7% (1 PCS move)
- 22.2% (2 PCS moves)
- 5.9% (3 PCS moves)
- .3% (4 or more PCS Moves)

So what do the teens have to say?
“If home is where you hang your hat, then we better start carrying around a hat rack.”

William Randall, USCG, Father of two

According to a recent study performed by the military, here are some problems that highschool-age children who accompanied their parents on a PCS move have encountered:

- **44.0%** Difficulty making social adjustments (making new friends, etc.)
- **28.1%** Timing of the move had a negative impact on participation in school sponsored activities
- **28.7%** Fell behind in coursework because of moving
- **27.1%** Felt under-challenged because of the quality of education at the new school
- **25%** Lost credit (no credit given) for a course they had completed
So what is the problem? I mean, psychologically speaking, what are the issues?

Elliot Aronson, a respected Social Psychologist has this to say in his book, “Nobody Left to Hate”:

“Typically, when teenagers move to a new town they have difficulty adjusting to their new situation, partly because the social climate in most high schools is not very welcoming.” -p.35

He goes on to elaborate:

‘High school has always been dominated by cliques and these cliques are organized into a rough kind of hierarchy…’ Precisely where a student falls on the clique hierarchy determines his or her level of stress and degree of happiness.” p.77 & 80
Kathy Murray, a MS student in the M.S.E.T. program at Ramapo College, made this observation:

“Survival needs and emotions take priority over new learning. This means that if a student is dealing with any issues in these areas, they will likely not be ready to learn.” Emotional issues may include a pending move, a looming divorce, relationship problems, etc.

*Taken from Ramapo College M.S.E.T. program website. Written by: Kathy Murray 2001*
So what can we do about it?

**Introducing MB**: A system for connecting and involving military youth with their peers to help them feel a stronger connection to their communities and schools.

MB is an online community that promotes physical interaction through participation in youth created projects.
1. Via the MB website, Military youth may volunteer to participate with a team of other youth in their area to carry out a specific project.

   Each team member is responsible for a different aspect of the project. (ie: publicity, location planning, documentation, etc.)

   Collaborative teams form in multiple regions to carry out similar projects simultaneously.

   *(projects may include, but are not limited to: blood drives, carnivals, film festivals, sporting competitions, recreational activities, political polls, art shows, etc…)*

2. Members from different teams who have the same responsibilities coordinate their efforts through the website. (Youth can give each other pointers on the best way to publicize their project, or cool locations to hold events or what local companies to talk to, etc.)
3. Team members present the different approaches discussed through web interaction to their local team members and then decide on the best way to carry out the project.

4. Local teachers act as advisers to mb teams to help them carry out their selected projects. They can help resolve conflicts, answer questions and motivate the teens to create successful projects.
Through the MB system, military teens will have the opportunity to share experiences with other mb’s and members of their communities both locally and remotely. They will have an established social network no matter where they move. Teens can be participants and/or creators, but no matter which role they choose to assume, they can always feel connected to the community of mb’s.
Where to from here?

The military system has been behind all too many military teens, and, as of the research, there is a large gap between military teens and any teens in their families or their school. This gap can cause negative effects, but there is a large need for research.
Because this system has been created for military teens, and, as of now, I haven’t had the opportunity to speak with any teens in military families or their school administrators, there is a large hole in my research.
But with your help this need can be filled.

I am interested in meeting with school administrators and students to discuss this project and get their feedback. I am also interested in conducting a test case mb project with a few teens from military families to help show the possibilities of such a system.

I would love to meet with you and answer any questions you may have about my project. I value your feedback and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Thank you for your time.

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