

The White House Blog

Marines and Students: A Perfect Partnership

Posted by Dr. Jill Biden on October 21, 2009 at 10:43 AM EDT

It's been a very busy couple of days but I wanted to make sure to write about an inspiring day I spent in North Carolina last Wednesday, where I visited with our Marines at Camp Lejeune and met students and faculty at Coastal Carolina Community College. I am always honored to meet our men and women in uniform, and on this day I felt so proud to be both a community college teacher and a military mom.



Jill Biden spends time with Marines from the 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion and their families prior to deployment.

After stopping into a classroom on campus at Coastal, I spent some time with college instructors and students. I always say that I am inspired by my own community college students because they work so hard to get an education while dealing with many of life's other challenges, like working full time and raising families. These students were no exception, they truly inspired me. They were all veterans, active duty Marines, or military spouses – working and raising families, serving our country, and training to be teachers on top of it all. It was incredible to see firsthand how Coastal is ensuring our service members and their families have access to higher education.

At many community colleges, students can complete the first two years of a baccalaureate degree at an affordable price, and then transfer on to a four-year university. Coastal Carolina Community College and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington are working together to make that transfer as easy as possible. Students in the cooperative "2+2" teacher education program can study for two years at Coastal, and then walk across the hall to complete their junior and senior years at UNCW extension classrooms, right on Coastal's campus. One student told me she had wanted to be a teacher since she was a kid but between her husband's deployments and raising children, she never got the chance to go to school. Now she is studying to be an elementary school teacher through the schools' 2+2 program.

From the community college I went to Camp Lejeune where I met with almost 150 Marines who were getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan. When I arrived I could not help feeling some of the same pride and anxiety I felt when my son Beau deployed to Iraq. But I was also so grateful to have the opportunity to thank these young Marines for their service. I admire their courage and strength, and I pray for their safe return.

I met more heroes at lunch, where I ate Carolina barbecue with wounded warriors and learned about how injured marines rely on each other while they heal. It was an emotional visit. I hope to continue raising awareness about the wonderful men and women in our military. I want them all to know how much we appreciate them while they are here, while they are deployed, and when they return, especially when they are recovering from injuries.

I always say that a simple "thank you" to a marine or a soldier, or a warm hug to a military mom can mean so much – and I saw this power first-hand at Camp Lejeune. I hope you will join me in thanking our men and women in uniform, and doing what you can to support them and their families. It's the simple things that can make a big difference.

-Jill