

## Military OneSource Podcast — 3 Issues Explained by Joint Service Teen Council, Part 2

### **Episode transcript**

#### **Intro voice-over:**

Hi, I'm Bruce Moody. Today's episode is part two of my conversation with amazing teens from military families. These are teens who recently briefed Pentagon leaders on the challenges that military teens face today. In today's episode, we get into the challenges and the solutions that they brought to leadership.

Also, we hope that you'll share today's conversation with other military families. We're on all the major podcast apps. Just tell them to search for Military OneSource and go ahead and subscribe while you're at it.

Lastly, I want to remind you that Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with personalized support, tools and resources for every step of military life. And now, my conversation with military teens.

#### **Bruce Moody:**

All right. It is a Friday morning and, for you guys, what it means is the last day of the Joint Service Teen Council, and you're all getting ready to head home. But let's start with where we are now. We're in Crystal City, and for those who don't know where Crystal City is, which is probably a lot of people, who wants to explain kind of what's nearest to us that is kind of relating to the conversation that we're having right now? You want to give it a go?

#### **Evelyn:**

We're next to the Pentagon and the Ronald Reagan Airport that we flew in from.

#### **Bruce Moody:**

Okay, so easy in, easy out and access to the Pentagon, which is really important. Okay, so the next thing I want to do with this conversation is get you to introduce yourself, which is really cool because we have a mix of people who are in the earlier podcast, which I'll describe in a second, and new folks as well. So I'm going to start with you, and I'm going to ask you to identify yourself by your first name only, the branch that you represent and the installation that you represent.

#### **Jonathan:**

Hi, I'm Jonathan. I am representing the Department of the Air Force, and I'm from Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho.

**Jonathan:**

I'm Jonathan. I represent the Department of the Air Force, and I'm from Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

**Keandre:**

My name is Keandre. I represent the Army, and I'm from U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz Baumholder.

**Keyanna:**

I'm Keyanna, I'm representing the Navy, and I'm from NSA Bahrain.

**Evelyn:**

I'm Evelyn. I'm representing the Navy, and I'm from NSA Bahrain.

**Jaiden:**

I'm Jaiden. I'm representing the Department of the Air Force, and I'm from Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.

**Bruce Moody:**

Your host, Bruce Moody, is very pleased about that. So what we're going to do is we're going to talk about why you're here, which is to attend the Joint Service Teen Council. Let's talk about that briefly because we have another podcast episode, which we will link to in the program notes, and we kind of get into the whole aspect of the council and, in fact, three of you were in that last episode and really helped us get an understanding of what it's all about. But really, the issue that we want to talk about today is what you brought to the council. So why don't you just begin and explain what it is that you did yesterday.

**Jonathan:**

Yesterday, we went and spoke up to people in the Pentagon, some really high people that can really make a change. I know I spoke on a big need for, at least my base and I know a lot of other bases, about transportation and the need for it on and both off base. So yeah.

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah, I remember that from the presentation. Okay. Let's talk about how did you come up with the topics that you were going to brief to leadership?

**Evelyn:**

Well, Keyanna and I really wanted to start from the base of the issues such as a lack of funding or staff because those are really the core parts of all the issues. So we wanted to really branch off on how we could improve that and therefore improve all the other topics that our fellow council members have thought of.

**Keyanna:**

We also got a lot of input from teams from our base before we finalized our issues. So we asked a lot of people from our teen centers.

**Bruce Moody:**

And were you asking them to fix these problems, or were these problems that you were letting them know that you were working on? Or is it sort of a combination or what was the ask when you went to the Pentagon?

**Keandre:**

I feel like that it was a mix of both, but most of it was asking them for support to help us with the problems that we see because a lot of it is — we can't change it, and that's why we're going up to these important people to ask for fundraising, transportation, availability and affordability. So things like that.

**Bruce Moody:**

Very cool. Yeah, that's one of the cool things that you learn from going to meetings like this is that as smart as you all are, the key to getting things done is putting together a group of really smart people who can actually do things. So let's spend much of the time as we can talking about the actual topics that you raised. So, transportation, you mentioned that. So what was the problem, and what was the solution that you brought to the leaders here?

**Jonathan:**

Okay, so the big issue about transportation is the average distance from the military installation to the nearest town or city is 18 to 40 minutes — quite a bit of distance.

**Bruce Moody:**

18 to 40 minutes of driving or walking? Or what are we talking about here?

**Jonathan:**

Driving. And that's just not reasonable for a lot of parents to go and get their kids, especially because two-thirds of all military families live off base in those near towns. So we don't really have a form of substantial transportation to get to on base and to get to

these teen centers and resources that we need. So one of the biggest solutions was busing, like having bus routes go through the town, pick up kids from school, after school to get to the teen center, have stops throughout the housing sector within the community, just so these teens can have that way to get to the teen center and where they need, where they can get these resources that will help them within the future.

**Bruce Moody:**

Mm-hmm. I did a podcast episode specifically on transportation, and I interviewed the transportation director of probably one of the largest installations in the countries — covers a huge geographical area. If you want to go anywhere, it's going to require a vehicle. And so they have a whole public-private partnership providing that sort of mass transit solution. So I'm going to, afterwards, after this recording, I'm going to give you the contact information for that person. Just remind me because we're going to talk about a lot of other topics as we go through this interview.

**Jaiden:**

I had a group with Jonathan and Keandre, and we talked about life-skill programs and the lack of life-skill programs in teen, like, centers and everything. And we talked about how we don't have stuff, like teens are lacking the substantial guidance to be able to have financial literacy, have workplace etiquette, have college and career prep. So we brought those ideas, and we made solutions that way we could collaborate with 4-H, Boys & Girls Club, places like that so we can be able to have those programs in the teen centers.

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah, so workplace etiquette. I mean, I got to tell you, that is one of the biggest things. Again, you're all smart, and you all want to do something really special. How you navigate an organization personally and officially is really important. So what I wanted to dive into just a little bit further is a couple of things that you pointed out. One of them is the 4-H. So for people who don't know about the 4-H, you're not just planting flowers. Give us a general idea, what are people learning. With regard to the area of workplace etiquette, why would they want to go and get involved with the 4-H?

**Jonathan:**

Okay, so yeah, it's not planting flowers. People think it's that, but it's really not. It's really just community service, and it helps you become more open-minded because if people come from different places and, everybody in 4-H, they're not from the same area, everybody's all around the world, all around the globe. And when we have a conference, everybody just comes together and try to make an idea, how can we involve community service in our lives?

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And then they're just trying to make community service more of a thing that you do and that's something that you gotta get to do, you have to get made to do. It's more of a thing where you just want to do it, and you don't have to be asked to do it. So I think they're trying to make it more like that, and they're trying to make it evolve in the more youth centers because I think youth really need it. They're kind of just at home doing whatever, but sometimes you can go outside and help the community, help your community and get your name out there also. I think when you help your community, also gets your name out there in the community, it makes you have a good light on your name as well. So I think the 4-H is trying to just do that but trying to do it in a way where you can have fun with it.

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay, cool. You also mentioned financial literacy, so what are the sort of things that you want to learn with regard to that?

**Keandre:**

A lot of the things that I would want to learn that I still haven't is writing checks, filing for taxes, loans. I know it's early, but mortgages, things like that that we haven't been taught in school that'd be nice to learn about.

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah, I mean we take these for granted as we get older, but you got to learn all of this stuff. Are there any other aspects of financial literacy or ... is it more about managing money or earning money? How do you see it?

**Jaiden:**

I think it's the whole aspect of keeping your money safe, learning how to use it and just making sure you don't get into debt. And when you leave high school, you're ready for what's going to come in college.

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah, it's a real thing. I mean one of the first things I ever did with a bank as a very, very young adult was bounce a check. In fairness to me, I went to the bank first and I said, "How much money is in my account?" And they said, "You have this much." And I said, "Good." And I went out and bought a camera not knowing that there was another inbound check that cleared before this check one cleared and then I got a nastygram in the mail. So you got to learn this stuff, and I learned through mistakes. Anyway, enough about me. So we talked about workplace etiquette, financial literacy. What are the other topics that you got into?

**Jaiden:**

Saying college and career prep. And then for solutions we had, we could do mental health sessions and video tutorials. So National Guard, they don't have centers or programs. So if the teams could watch video tutorials on a website or something like that, because Jonathan was also talking about earlier or when we were presenting our ideas, that we could learn how to tie a tie or learn how to shave and everything like that.

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah. These are all really, really valid things. Also, so are you envisioning getting all of these skills brought to you through your local teen center?

**Jaiden:**

Yes, and others, because I don't want it to just affect me and my teen center. I want it to affect everybody, so everybody has that opportunity.

**Bruce Moody:**

Right. So you're representing the community of military teens, and you're saying, "We have talked to our teens, we've talked to our colleagues." But to get at that, you're saying that if you were to get these sort of things you would want to get them through the teen center? What would that look like to you?

**Evelyn:**

I think that they already stated that it could just be an online toolbox able to be shared, or it could be, also as they said, hands-on teaching to get that emotional connection. But I'm sure that they could describe it better.

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay.

**Jonathan:**

I would like to say it is not all military that we want. I think we want every, even traditional Boys & Girls Clubs, every teen, every kid needs to learn this. I think it just should be established like that. It should not just be, "Oh yeah, we're trying to do this for the teens, we're trying to do this for us." No, I think we should do it for everybody. I think everybody should need these skills and everybody should learn these things for life. It's like for your future, you need this right now. And then when you get up in your older age, then you going to have them skills, and you're going like, "Oh yeah, I can use this now." So that's things for everybody.

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay, cool. So what are some of the other issues that you brought to the group yesterday? But I wanted to let everybody know — you spoke to a group of people. How many people would you say, leaders, you were speaking to yesterday? Five? Okay. But they represent, and this is important, they're not just all the same people from one office. They represent a range of different offices in the Pentagon, and they all have their own unique view toward the things that you brought them. And along that, they also have their own policies, their own budgets and resources. And so you tapped into a really powerful group of people. Okay, go ahead, please.

**Keyanna:**

One of the other issues we talked about was funding. Like everyone said, it's like the base of all of our issues. And so mainly it was getting equal opportunities for all the clubs. Because some clubs, they get grants and can fundraise, but especially overseas, there's a lot of policies that say that we can't fundraise or it's really just up to our leaders that say yes or no, but they say no, but don't see how that can impact us as a whole. And also, if we don't have the right amount of funds, we don't have the right amount of staff. So that was really important.

**Bruce Moody:**

So staff at the teen centers you're talking about? And talk more about the fundraising.

**Evelyn:**

So yes, we are asking them to give us extra funding, but we are also coming with a solution ourselves that we can do ourselves, such as locally fundraising. We're not asking them to do all the work for us. We also want to help our clubs with extracurricular activities such as sport clubs, art clubs, community service. So we want to also help our clubs along with them.

**Bruce Moody:**

So you're actually wanting to be a part of the solution as well as the — bringing them a problem. That's how you bring a problem to your leaders, you bring them a solution as well. So where would you want this funding to go? What would you want to see the funding used for?

**Keyanna:**

I'd like to see some of the funding used towards different trips especially — like I said, overseas, if we don't have the right amount of funding, then we can't go on these trips and get involved with the more stateside clubs. And I think that's really important. But also, funding different ideas that we present to our leaders. For example, we came up with this teen summit to exchange cultures, but we got the funding, but because we don't have enough staff, we weren't able to do it.

**Jaiden:**

I was just going to say for planning for the Air Force teen programs and all that, I know I would want to go to more stuff like this, like Keystone and 4-H, but because of the funding we were not able to do that.

**Bruce Moody:**

Keystone being Boys & Girls Club of America. What do you think? So the question is, when you go to the teen center, you have a bunch of resources available to you, like this Joint Service Teen Council and 4-H and the Boys & Girls Club of America. As a group of resources, what does it mean to you when you go to the teen center and you're thinking about some of the things that you might get out of the experience of being part of the teen center?

**Jonathan:**

All of those resources, I feel like it's a really great opportunity that I know a lot of people aren't getting, especially in my town, Mountain Home. I see a different divide between military and my town because my town — there's nothing to do. So there's a large teen population who do drugs, who do drink, and it's just not a great thing that they have going. But the resources that we are able to be given as military teens, the people that go to the teen center and have these resources, being given what they need to become the leaders that are going to fill what Mr. Simon's shoes, all of the people that we just went in there, Mr. Larry, all of them, were able to be in those positions and be a step ahead of what we need. Especially as a military kid, you're moving around all the time, and you might lack some of those resources that not-military, not-moving around teen might have. It's just a big help to have those resources and to get those resources. It's a huge need for all of us to have.

**Bruce Moody:**

Let me ask you as a group because you mentioned the drinking and the drugs and just harmful behavior, put them in a big bucket — harmful behaviors that are being practiced by military teens. So there's a military service member in the mix who's trying to focus on the mission while also be a parent at the same time. And those two things in one head is a big, big challenge. So what do you think that you are all doing by bringing these issues to leadership in terms of making the service members in your lives better able to focus on their mission?

**Keyanna:**

One of the things I said to them is that when service members are worried about their family, then they can't fulfill their duties as military, effectively. There was a study that showed the mental health of service members and that the main cause of suicide between them is parent fulfillment problems. So making sure that we address this issue,



so our clubs are keeping us safe and ... a place where we can be while they're focusing on their work is very important.

**Bruce Moody:**

Anyone else want to expand on that?

**Jonathan:**

I did talk about mental health as one of the issues that we have. A teen's mental health definitely is a big cause of them not wanting to speak out, but the teens on military bases understand you the most because they understand how you feel, they understand what you've been going through. They understand that, "Oh yeah, you've been moving from base to base, you've made friends in another base, but now you here and you got to restart all over it again." It's like you just went from level 50 and you went back to level 1. So now you over here just trying to regain that. You trying to make a new impact on somebody, but you just kind of restarted, so now you just trying to figure out how to come back.

So when I was talking to them, I was kind of telling them that, "Oh yeah, 53% of teens are feeling lonely and then 52% of teens are feeling like they're failing at life goals, which means 100% is just not good." Put more impact on kids' lives and make it more like, "Oh yeah, we need to fix this because this is the future. We can't have the future feeling down and not feeling like they can do something."

**Bruce Moody:**

So you bring up a really, really important point, which is you're all moving around a lot, and life is hard. So how are you connecting to people who are brand new to your community? Let's talk about Bahrain because it's an overseas assignment, as is Germany, but what is your thought when you see somebody, a new teen whose family has just moved into the community?

**Evelyn:**

It's like I see a little bit of myself in them, and I feel this compassion. So I really try and go out of my way to make them feel at home, and I try and introduce them to the new clubs I'm in, try and see if they want to join anything new, and I'll let them know that I'm there for them.

**Keyanna:**

I'd say same for me, especially thinking about how I felt when I first moved to Bahrain because not a lot of people go there. It's a culture that you don't get to see a lot. So whenever I'm at the teen center or I know new people are coming, I always try to be there, get them to join in in different activities, show them around the school, things like that.

**Bruce Moody:**

Now let me just stay on Bahrain for a few seconds because I've been to Bahrain a lot. It's a remote tour but talk to me about the social aspect of it because this happens a lot. For people who are new to the military, the degree to which an assignment or a location is remote, you need to understand that the social aspect of the community just goes up in the opposite direction. How would you describe the degree to which people are socializing with each other, hanging out, barbecues, just looking after each other because it is such a remote location?

**Evelyn:**

I'd say that there's definitely not a lot of barbecues, but there are a lot of different clubs such as the Keystone Club. Actually, there might not be a lot of clubs, but there's definitely a lot of different friend groups, different cliques, they all have their own things. But I'd say that there is a medium amount of socialization.

**Keyanna:**

Especially in our school, like she said, there's a lot of different groups, but I think that kind of hurts us because our school is so small. So once a group is formed, it kind of stays that way, and we don't mix a lot — unless you're involved in a teen center, then it's like ...

**Bruce Moody:**

And that's really a big difference. And let me just ask the question I asked last time, but I'll ask it again, and I'll look at different people's views. What is the difference between being in the teen center versus not being in the teen center?

**Jonathan:**

So being in a teen center, it just brings a lot more of a boost in my mental health. I know there was a section of two, three years that I couldn't go to the teen center, and my mental health dropped like flies, and it was just a really rough time for me because I didn't have really any socialization. Even in school, I'm not really a social person. It's a small town — everybody has their groups, and there's not much intermingling within that. But the teen center kind of opened me up and, well, not opened me up, but the groups and kids in there opened up and kind of invited me into that. It made me feel included and more like I'm not completely alone in this.

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay. Let me ask you a different question because what would you say to the introverts of the world who think that going into a teen center full of teens would just freak them out? Is that? Okay.

**Keyanna:**

As a past introvert myself, I'll say it is super scary, but —this is easier said than done — but just go out there, open yourself up. Because once you find people that are similar to you, you'll open each other up. It's like once you catch a vibe, you guys will vibe together, and you'll become extroverts together.

**Bruce Moody:**

I mean, do you have to become an extrovert, or are they going to accept you for —

**Keyanna:**

Meet you halfway.

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay. Okay. Halfway introvert. Halfway.

**Evelyn:**

Yes. I would also just say that the good thing about moving is that it's all temporary. So what's the worst thing that could happen if you just go and introduce yourself? The whole mindset I have is that you aren't as important as you think you are. Nobody's watching your every little move. Feel free to just go and socialize. What's the worst that could happen?

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay, I'm just going to stop you there because that is the most mature thought that I never had as a teenager. Never. Everything was the end of the world. Everything was do or die. Everything was absolute. And what you're saying, and somebody jump in, is that you can make mistakes, you can embarrass yourself, you can get off on the wrong foot, and it's okay. How liberating is that?

**Jonathan:**

Yeah, because for me — my mom retired in Oklahoma, so I always stayed next to the base. So, me, I had to see everybody leave me. It was crazy. I'm just seeing everybody leaving. I'm like, oh my goodness, I just got to sit here and just let it happen. I can't do nothing about it. But every time somebody left, I ain't going to lie, somebody new came in.

So even though somebody left, really dear to my heart, I really missed with and had a good bond, but somebody else came in and then I just had to bring that loss into somebody new, and I kind of just broke in and then taught them everything they needed to know about the youth center because I've been here for so long. They kind come to me to tell them, "Okay, I'm going to show you around. I'm going to give you a

tour. I'm going to show you who's who." So it's kind of like that, but you kind of got to get used to it and it's crazy. But yeah, you kind just got to know, "oh yeah, okay, somebody's going to leave. But yeah, I'm kind of used to it now where I can just say goodbye and then hopefully we just keep talking even after they leave."

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah. That's awesome. I got to wrap up the conversation, but I'm just really thrilled to have this time with you to be here this week to see you all coming and being in our town, which is very, very hazy because of fires in Canada, but it's an amazing time to be with you. And I think maybe the last question I want to toss out would be what would you say to the younger folks who are just a year or two away from making the decision about whether or not they should be a part of the teen center?

**Evelyn:**

You have a voice. Don't just deal with things. Know that you can change them, and you can advocate for yourself and others. Don't forget your worth.

**Keandre:**

I'm going to say, "Just do it." There's nothing that you could do at the teen center that's going to hurt you. I mean, there's so many opportunities. So many possibilities and things you could do. I mean, we all here because of our teen center, and I think everybody should have that opportunity the same way we did.

**Bruce Moody:**

Okay, so now I'm going to change the question. What do you want to tell parents? How about that?

**Jonathan:**

I'm going to tell the parents the teen center gives them a lot better things than they may realize. It boosts them up a whole lot better than just sitting at home. So get that child out their room playing the video games and get them socializing because that's going to help in the long run. That's going to help them make strong bonds for when they're adults. That's going to help them boost themselves within the business and job community. It's just going to set them up for life.

**Keyanna:**

One thing I'll say is make sure you're not estimating the teen center. We're not just going there to play games and have fun. We're going there to make a difference and use our voices. And by coming together and having that fun, we're coming up with a bunch of different ideas and things that we can do to make not just our teen centers better, but the whole community — military community, Boys & Girls Club — better.

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**Bruce Moody:**

Okay. And I'm biased, so I'm going to give Moody Air Force Base the last word.

**Jaiden:**

I was going to tell parents that, like Keyanna said earlier, that when their teens go to these teen centers and programs, that they feel a sense of relief that they won't have to worry about their kid because teen centers and programs, they provide your teen with the necessary resources to have fun and to get along with their peers and to make change like Keyanna said. So it's just a sense that, yeah, your kid is doing something good, yeah, they're having fun and that they will be okay.

**Bruce Moody:**

Excellent. You look like you have one more thing to say, and we'll wrap it up there.

**Evelyn:**

Okay. I would just like to tell my parents and especially my dad: Thank you for being a service member because I am proud to be a military kid.

**Bruce Moody:**

Awesome. Okay. That is awesome. That's where we're going to end it. I really appreciate everybody being with us today. It's been an awesome week — really proud of what you did, and I think it will absolutely make a difference. So then we wrap things up and let everybody know that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We love to hear from you. If you have any questions, if you want to leave a comment about the conversation you heard today, we have a link in the program notes, and just go ahead and send us a note. We always like to hear from you. And be sure to subscribe to this podcast wherever you listen to your podcasts because we cover a wide range of topics to help military families navigate military life. I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.

**Group:**

Bye.