

Department of Defense Dependent Schools-Europe Phi Delta Kappa luncheon remarks by Lt. Gen. Donald M. Campbell Jr., commanding general, U.S. Army Europe.

As prepared for event on Feb. 23, 2013.

Dr. Bresell, distinguished guests, teachers, administrators, and educational professionals of DoDDS-Europe-- thank you for inviting Ann and I to join you today.

Winston Churchill once said, "we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

After just hearing from our DoDDS-Europe teachers of the year, I can hardly think of a more appropriate quote to describe all of you, our DoDDS professional educators, who give so much of themselves to improve and enhance the lives of our children.

Teachers like Daniele Massey, Christopher Thomas, and Michael Brust truly set an example of leadership and excellence we can all be proud of. Ann and I are thrilled to finally have the chance to meet with all of you from the DoDDS-Europe team, and to hear of all the wonderful things going on in DoDDS and in your classrooms.

You truly represent the best of the best, and your commitment to improving the lives of our children, our families, and our communities makes us a stronger team.

Teachers and soldiers share a special bond that is rooted in a mutual sense of duty and selfless service.

Our professions demand the highest standards of personal and professional conduct, and we place enormous value on traits like leadership, teamwork, and respect.

For this reason only the best go on to serve in our ranks-- less than one percent of the U.S. population goes into the military, and only two percent become teachers.

Together we form a select segment of our society that is dedicated to service, and through partnership we play a key role in shaping our nation's future.

DoDDS-Europe and U.S. Army Europe have a long and important tradition of partnership that goes back several decades.

This is because the very nature of your mission—to promote high-quality education for our children—is also central to our own mission at USAREUR.

On the U.S. Army Europe team, we have a whole host of duties and responsibilities, from preparing our soldiers and units for combat, to interacting with foreign military leadership.

But one of the responsibilities we take most seriously is to care for and support the thousands of army families stationed here in Germany and across Europe.

A critical component of this is ensuring the children of our soldiers and civilians are taken care of in terms of education, and their mental and physical well-being.

The well-being of our military families, and especially of our children, is something very near and dear to my heart.

As someone who has raised children in the DoDDS system, and as the proud husband of a certified teacher, I am acutely aware of the importance teachers play. Not only in educating our children in the classroom, but in helping them make it through difficult transitions, as parents deploy, go on temporary duty assignments, or as families move to new permanent duty stations.

My own son Craig graduated from high school during my first deployment to Iraq, and my daughter Leslie started her senior year at Heidelberg High School while I was deployed a second time, and went on to graduate in 2007. These were important moments in our lives, and teachers were an indispensable part of their success and resilience while I was away.

For the USAREUR community, the last ten years have been especially busy.

While moving is certainly nothing new for military families, the past decade has seen an increase in transitions due to additional factors such as deployment and transformation.

Not only have our communities persevered throughout multiple deployments to places like Iraq and Afghanistan, but at the same time we've undergone a massive transformation process that has seen units deactivate, installations close, and families transferred to new duty locations.

All this has placed considerable added stress on our families and communities and on all of you as well.

Over the next two years, USAREUR will continue to transform as we go from a current force of 40,000 troops and sixteen garrisons, to a force of 30,000 troops and seven garrisons by 2015.

As installations continue to close and more units deactivate or re-align, our families will have to adjust to new communities, and our children will transfer to new schools, changing teachers and mentors, and forced to make new friends.

This is where all of you play a critical role. Moving is tough on families, let alone children, but thanks to the support of our teachers and administrators in DoDDS, our children are able to make this adjustment incredibly well.

In addition to providing a top-notch education in the classroom, teachers provide an essential stabilizing force by helping students adjust to the myriad of challenges they confront.

Whether it is a parent who's deployed, or a family transitioning to a new assignment, teachers are facilitating the smooth transitions our children need.

Through it all, teachers just like you provide our children the stability and continuity they need in their lives.

So thank you for your patience, for your care, and for your adaptability throughout this tumultuous time. We wouldn't be successful in our mission without all of you.

Once again it was a pleasure to meet with all of you today, to hear your philosophies on education and child development, and to hear of all the wonderful things that are going on in your classrooms.

Thanks to professionals like all of you, the USAREUR team can focus on the mission with the confidence that our children are getting a world class education.

Organizations like Phi Delta Kappa, DoDDS, as well as other initiatives like the military child education coalition, all play a critical role in improving the lives of our children, strengthening our families, and building resilience in our communities.

Military children are one of our most precious national resources, and it's no secret that their education and development forms the foundation our nation's future, prosperity, and leadership across the world.

Indeed, children of military members are several times more likely to pursue service-oriented careers themselves.

Ann and I share your steadfast commitment to our children and we look forward to continuing our partnership with you.

So once again, thank you for all you do to support our children, our families, and our communities!