

MILITARY SPOUSES

Take Advantage of New Educational Benefit



Jessica Lipari
with husband
Kevin at the
Colosseum in
Rome.



Kristen Keyser
with husband
Matthew, son
Kevin, and
daughter Cassidy
on vacation in
Corpus Christi.

The MyCAA (Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts) program is off to great start at Excelsior's Center for Professional Development (CPD). The MyCAA, a new benefits program, introduced in June 2009, by the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community & Family Policy (DUSD/MC&FP), allows spouses of active duty or reserve military to apply for up to \$6000 in financial assistance for education, training, and licensing or certification programs. In the first eight weeks of the program, fifteen spouses had already registered, taking a total of twenty-one CPD courses/programs.

The generous educational benefit allows many of the students to work toward fulfilling long-term career goals. Jessica Lipari is a newlywed living in USAG Bamberg, Germany, with her husband, Kevin, a platoon sergeant for the 173rd Airborne. She's using the time to get the necessary training for a new career. "My career was in the construction industry as an estimator," said Ms. Lipari. "I was working mainly for new home builders, and at the end of my career I was running estimating departments." While the pay was good, the hours were long, so Lipari started to think about pursuing a new career. Always involved in organizing events in high school, and now at the base as a volunteer in marketing and special events, she's enrolled in the Event Management and Wedding Planning CPD courses. "I thought it would be a great time to get the schooling I would need to open up my own event and wedding planning business," she said.

Kristen Keyser, Fort Hood, Texas, is another military spouse taking advantage of the program. She is currently enrolled in the Medical Billing and Coding course and plans

to continue on to the Medical Transcription course. With two children, now seven and eight years old, Ms. Keyser would like to start working outside the home and build a career. She found out about the program when her husband, Matthew, an Army E4P, was at the Education Center at Fort Hood, looking to see how he could enroll in classes. Matthew also got some information about MyCAA. "He brought it home, and I immediately jumped on the opportunity," said Keyser. "I had everything done and taken care of and ready to go within days."

For many spouses, this is the best opportunity that's been made available to take courses. But with many colleges and universities offering programs, why did these students choose Excelsior? "Ultimately, Excelsior College had the four certification classes that fit into my goal of going back to school," said Lipari. "It was online, and you can work at your own pace, so I can balance life with school." The MyCAA benefit will cover four courses with some additional out-of-pocket expenses to complete two additional courses, if needed. "I will complete my courses and have a well-prepared business plan, so I can hit the ground running when I get back," said Lipari. Keyser's reaction is similar; "Excelsior just seemed to be the best fit for me, and I was right in thinking that. It's worked out wonderfully, and I have no complaints."

By Susan Kryczka, Executive Director, Center for Professional Development

For more information on how to use military spouse benefits or other military and veteran tuition assistance programs for CPD courses, call toll free 888-647-2388 ext. 118211.