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NEWS RELEASE

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Support for Children of Deployed Military

HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – Robins Air Force Base School Liaison Officer (SLO) Lesley Darley offers a program to Houston County schools in support of students whose active duty parents are deployed. To help them deal with their parent's absence, Darley visits children at school to do projects and to give them the opportunity to discuss their parent's deployment with adults and peers who face similar situations.

The program is being offered at schools with high military populations with an enrollment of greater than 40 percent active duty military children. A pilot was implemented last year at three schools: David Perdue Primary, David Perdue Elementary and Matt Arthur Elementary. This year the program is being expanded to four more schools: Bonaire Elementary, Hilltop Elementary, Lake Joy Elementary and Lake Joy Primary.

The next program will be held at Matt Arthur Elementary on Oct. 28, at 2:30 p.m. Darley and Matt Arthur Elementary Counselor Laura Melnick will do an activity with about 25 children.

Darley and the RAFB Personal and Family Readiness Program staff provide materials for age-appropriate activities with a focus on staying connected or re-integration. Examples are: tumblers with pictures of the children, "countdown to homecoming" candy jars and personalized pillowcases. Monthly activities average 20 student participants. The group is open to dependents of all branches.

This support group initiative was selected by Headquarters Air Force as a "best practice." Darley presented the project in March 2011 at the first global AF School Liaison Officers Conference. She received a grant for \$1,000 grant from the major command to help implement the program this school year. The ultimate goal is to service every military child in Houston County. For more information, contact Darley at 478-327-7692 or lesley.darley@robins.af.mil.

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