Advice for TAHS students who may want to enlist in our military and their parents/guardians

***Student*:** Do your homework and learn as much about the military career that most interests you *before* you begin talking with a recruiter. Learn from others who complain that they got short-changed by their recruiter. This won't happen to you if you go in prepared. Make a list of questions and keep adding to that list each time you speak with a recruiter. Make good notes of your discussions with your recruiter. Sit with a parent or guardian, someone mature and whose advice you trust, to make these lists of questions and notes, and keep updating them.

***Parent*:** To best serve your student, you need to be part of their military career exploration process. You know your student. The military can be one of the greatest training grounds for life, but the military isn't for everyone. Your recruiter will probably want to start by exploring enlistment opportunities, but encourage your student to look beyond these and make sure he/she first inquires about officer opportunities. Your student may find that he or she is qualified for more than ever imagined. Help your student get the best possible arrangement he or she can get. Decisions made today will impact the rest of your student's life.

Helpful Hints for the Student:

1. You are in charge and the military wants you, not the other way around. The recruiter is a salesperson, he or she is there to fill a quota. Recruiters may or may not have your best interests in mind. Some say it is like buying a car – don't let them know what you are really thinking. If you let them know you are looking around at all branches of the military, they will try to better serve your needs. They will sweet talk you, but they are not allowed to lie to you.
2. If you want a specific job, don't budge until you get it in writing and signed by the recruiter. Sometimes you will be told to enlist now and then "we can work out the paperwork after basic training." By then it will be too late and you will no longer have control. The next few years of your life will not be what you want and you will be miserable. Don't budge until you get what is best for you and only you can answer that question.
3. Recruiters have quotas to fill, and they are under pressure to fill the available jobs that are open at that moment. The problem is the available slots may be for jobs that you aren't interested in. If this is the case, tell the recruiter that you will be happy to wait until a slot for a job that you want comes open. The recruiter won't like it, but if he or she wants you, he or she will wait. Remember, jobs come open every day. Just keep checking the computer until what you want becomes available.
4. The more education you have the more likely you are to qualify for any given area. The military offers many avenues of assistance, from tuition assistance, to delayed enlistment, to a full ride if you qualify.
5. Physical fitness - This is the primary area where many people are eliminated. Out of shape is not necessarily a disqualifier, but being overweight, having excess body fat and/or pre-existing conditions generally are disqualifiers
6. Remember to highlight special qualifiers such as speaking a second language, playing an instrument, or special skills or being qualified at a trade or profession.
7. When you have your first interview with the recruiter, the recruiter will be searching for a reason to disqualify you – are you surprised? Much like colleges and businesses, the first

review of job applications is intended to get rid of those obviously not suited for the job. Those that remain become your stronger candidates. The military has a similar approach.

8. You are not actually committed to the military until you travel to Harrisburg to the Military Entry Processing Station (MEPS) where you will sign the official documents and you have been sworn in. Often times they will have a swearing in ceremony in our area, but this is for show. The final point of commitment is at the MEPS.
9. When you go to MEPS, you are permitted to take a parent, guardian or someone over 18 with you. This person can help you ask any final questions or raise concerns. Sometimes the nerves of a new recruit may be on edge and that person will forget to ask important, fundamental questions. Having someone with you can be an enormous help. Remember, you can always sign up later if things don't feel right.
10. As you choose a job in the military, look for one that translates well into the civilian world. Look for jobs that require certification and special training in the civilian sector.
11. You might want to consider the military academies; acceptance may not be as difficult as you think. Contact your local congressman for details and a referral.
12. Don't forget about the Coast Guard, even though they technically fall under the Department of Transportation; they are still considered a uniformed service.

Questions for your recruiter:

1. What jobs are available? Is my area of interest available?
2. What are the training and advancement opportunities for jobs that I'm eligible for?
3. How long is my enlistment? What is the minimum commitment?
4. Am I eligible for any special enlistment programs or bonuses?
5. What do I have to score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test to qualify?
6. What are the major differences in pay, benefits and job opportunities between services?
7. Do you have films or literature about military life and particular jobs?
8. How long is basic training? Where is it? What is it like?
9. What physical fitness requirements must I meet to enter the military and succeed in basic training?
10. What are the possibilities for remote or overseas duty stations?
11. What would pay be like?
12. Can I take college courses or other training programs while in the military?
13. Are there any upcoming military events in the area, such as airshows, fleet weeks, etc.?
14. Can a friend and I go to basic training together?
15. What are the haircut or other appearance standards that will apply to me?
16. What's the delayed entry program?
17. What are the next steps?

A few commonly believed falsehoods:

1. "Go to jail, or join the military." This is not the case anymore. In fact, if you are in so much trouble that this is what the judge is telling you - you're already morally disqualified.

2. "I'll drop out of school; then join the military." You have to get a high school diploma in order to qualify for the military. Or, you can finish your sophomore year and do a semester of college.
3. "The military is always hiring, and you can leave right away." If you're a graduate, they may not 'hire you' for a several months. They have minimum numbers they have to get, as well as maximum numbers they are allowed to recruit.
4. "If my record is sealed, the military won't look at it." When they do a police record check, it shows all charges and records, regardless of whether it's been sealed or not.
5. "I'll hide my medical/drug/legal/moral/educational condition" Simply put – no, you won't. The military is very good at gaining trust, building rapport, and they constantly screen - eventually they'll catch you. Be honest and up front about it, and 99/100 times they will try to work with you.
6. "Recruiters lie!" Not if they value their careers. If recruiters are caught lying to a potential military candidate, they are led out of the RSS in handcuffs. No joking. As for lying - yes, it was common in the 80's and 90's because there was no way to verify the information. Today there are countless ways to access this information. This doesn't mean it doesn't happen, but recruiters know if they lie to you and you tell your friends - that recruiter's reputation is ruined.
7. "The military will take anyone." No, they won't. Statistically less than 1% of the US population is qualified for military service. (Morally, medically, educationally)

Parents who don't want their student to enlist - a few suggestions:

1. Please be polite to the recruiter. Yelling at them, hanging up, and being rude will only turn the situation into a competition.
2. Recruiters are not magicians. They can't make someone who's not interested enlist unless that student wants to do so.
3. Have your student be completely honest. Don't lie about being disqualified. Just answer the recruiters' questions, tell them you're not interested, and they'll be on their way.
4. The military has changed a great deal in the last two decades. Ask questions. It isn't the military those over 40 used to know.

Sources used in compiling this list:
Edward J. Hull, Colonel, USAF retired
Mr. Scott Sessaman, Staff Sergeant, US Army retired
Mrs. Leah Deskevich, TAHS English teacher
Mr. Cummins McNitt, TAHS Social Studies teacher

Websites used in compiling this list:
www.military.com
http://student-of-life.newsvine.com/_news/2011/02/23/6117453-tips-on-how-to-deal-with-military-recruiters-from-one