

[00:00:01.485] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:00:38.655] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast where we share resources by and for adoptive and foster moms. I'm Lisa Qualls

[00:00:46.575] - Melissa Corkum

and this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it and we're here for you.

[00:00:52.245] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to Episode 117 of The Adoption Connection podcast. Today, we're talking about the possibility of military service for your teen and young adult. And we get a lot of questions and we have our own questions about what our teens are going to do as they're finishing high school and moving into those young adult years. Are they going to go to college? Are they going to enter the military? Are they going to pursue a vocation of some sort? So today, Melissa, you interviewed Colette Topfer on this.

[00:01:25.215] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So Colette is a coach for Life and Career Accountability Coaching. She also instructs a Junior ROTC program at a local high school, and she has served for twenty five years in the military herself. And so she now serves families and students who are thinking about joining the military and helping them, you know, think through where their strengths are, if this would be a good fit, and then really helping them understand what steps they need to take. And so she was able to answer a lot of the questions that you guys had as a community about our teens kind of moving into military service as an option post high school. So here's my conversation with Colette.

[00:02:21.505] - Melissa Corkum

Colette, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:02:23.605] - Colette Topfer

Thank you. Thank you for having me. This is pretty awesome. I've never been in a podcast before, so this is great.

[00:02:29.875] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, now you're no longer a podcast virgin.

[00:02:33.355] - Colette Topfer

Excellent. Thanks to Melissa, we're good to go.

[00:02:36.565] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so will you start off by just telling us kind of what your day to day looks like, like what this role as a Junior ROTC is? Because I think I have really no like I don't even have a bucket to pull from, you know, when I read that in your bio, like, what does that even mean, Colette?

[00:02:55.745] - Colette Topfer

Right, no, a lot of a lot of people ask me the same thing because I say, "I'm a teacher" and everyone's like, "OK, you're a teacher." But then they say, "what do you teach?" And I say, "Junior ROTC" and they're like, "wait, what?" And I was like, "yes, the army and other services have the program, Junior

ROTC." So what we do, is we teach leadership, life skills, things that the high school students are going to see like now or even right when they, right when they graduate from school. So I work with I work with kids in high school and most of them get pushed into the program, but some people actually choose to come into that class. But they come from various backgrounds and a lot of a lot of the kids actually appreciate the structure, the accountability, and the other things that we instill, leadership, teamwork. All those things that we instill in them because they don't always find that at home. And so that's that's what we try to teach them in class. So a typical day is, well, in a typical world, I go I go to school, I go to school and I teach, I teach the kids in person. We have after school activities such as drill and ceremony where they're marching, they're doing pacing movements. We have color guards, we take the kids, we work with them. We go to events in the area. We do color guard for those events. We we do just about anything and we've done Reached Across America. So I like to try and take them out and see things happening in their community and where they can help or be a better citizen. So it's kind of a-

[00:04:34.675] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. It sounds like it's a really fun job. It's probably a hard job to do virtually in this covid world. You mentioned that some of the kids are kind of pushed into the program. So what, why might a young adult or a student kind of be encouraged to be in your program?

[00:04:55.405] - Colette Topfer

Well, I think the main thing is, is if they're looking for structure and accountability, Junior ROTC is, it falls under the the Department of the Army. So it is a program where it's, that's what we live for. We live for structure. We live for accountability. We live for teamwork and leadership. And most, I would say 90 percent of these kids that I work with, don't have that at home, and, well, they don't. And unfortunately, a lot of these kids are in tough situations where they don't have anything at home. So this is what they they look forward to when they come to school. They look forward to working with myself, my other instructors, and we almost are like a little family inside the school. And so I think that helps them provide direction, maybe where they want to go in life. We're almost like parental figures, if you will, because they may not have those at home. So we kind of help them in the direction they want to go when they get out of high school.

[00:05:55.045] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I imagine there's probably a sense of stability that comes with your program that probably feels very safe to kids who may have a chaotic environment at home or have come from some kind of adverse experience.

[00:06:09.175] - Colette Topfer

Yeah, I kind of I kind of explain it to them as "when I joined the military, it's like I gained a second family." So I had, I had my family at home, but then when I joined the military, everyone's kind of in this weird situation where they're not sure what's happening, what's going on, but we're all in the same situation, so we kind of bond together and we formed that little family. I still have, people that I went to basic training with and I'm friends with over like twenty seven years ago. So it's just, you create that immediate bond and that's what we try to do in Junior ROTC as well. So the kids have something in common and they almost look at each other like their family, so.

[00:06:49.315] - Melissa Corkum

So tell us a little bit about what your experience was in the military and then why are you now passionate about what you do for the next generation coming behind you?

[00:07:01.375] - Colette Topfer

So I grew up as a military brat, if you will. My dad was in the Navy for twenty years. We moved around a lot. So my brother and I, we were kind of our siblings as well as friends because, you know, I grew up and went to eight different schools out of my twelve years.

[00:07:17.095] - Melissa Corkum

Wow

[00:07:17.095] - Colette Topfer

So, yeah. You build resilience, you build just I don't know, just a some sort of an independence, if you will, just because you have to be a leader for yourself, you have to be independent because you have to function in these new environments all the time. So I grew up military in high school. I was kind of "what am I going to do?" I'm not sure what my plans were after high school. I ended up playing soccer for two years in college, but then after that, I was like, "ugh," I just want to go do something else. So I ended up enlisting in the military. I enlisted in the army as a private. So I went in, when I told my parents, I said, I'm going to go enlist in the army and I'm going to be a private. And my dad, after 20 years of being a Navy pilot officer, he was like, "are you sure that's what you want to do?" And so I explained to them, I said, "look," I said, "I'm going to join the military, I'm going to have benefits. I'm going to be able to earn money for college. I'm going to finish college." And I went to him with a plan. So as soon as I told him my plan, he's like, "oh, you already have it all thought out." So, and I really didn't have any mentors back then that dealt with the army other than my dad. And he told me a few things, but it would have been really nice to have someone to talk to to kind of understand what I was walking into because you just have no idea. So I enlisted. I finished school while I was in. I got commissioned in 1998 as a lieutenant. I had all the positions I, I ended up as a battalion commander at the end, as a lieutenant colonel. Finished my master's and I was able to really experience the military. And I feel like a lot of kids, they come into the military like, holy cow, their eyes are huge as big as saucers going, what am I walking into? And I feel like I am able to help them understand, you know, you're going into the military, but it's not just a three to five year job. You go into the military, it can be a career. It can help you. It can pay for your school. It can give you opportunities. It can give you that resilience and leadership that you will be successful in life with. So I think just over all the years, and especially now that I'm in Junior ROTC in high school, they're are kind of like stuck and kind of where I was when I was in high school going, "I'm not sure what I want to do." Or they just don't have the background, the family, the support system that they need to maybe get them to the next level. I just had a girl who graduated. I worked with her for a year and a half and she's in basic training right now. And she made it and she probably got one of the toughest stories I've ever heard. A kid shouldn't have to go through. But she made it. And I told her, I said, "This is it. Now this is your this is your starting line for the rest of your life." And her right there was the one that kind of got me thinking and understanding how this can impact any kid at any age, honestly.

[00:10:33.195] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks for sharing. A lot of our listeners have kids with all kinds of different diagnoses, but a lot of mental health diagnoses, whether that be ADD, or something more serious, like an oppositional defiance disorder. Does any of that disqualify our kids from even considering the military as an option?

[00:10:56.245] - Colette Topfer

So, obviously The Department of Defense has their medical standards for a reason, I feel like every day or every year there's, there's new things that are coming out. There's new cures. There's new things that are helping kids. In order to fully qualify, they go through, they go through pretty rigorous, physical and testing and everything else. And it's not all of a sudden they see one word and they go, you're done. They go through, they really look at their records. They do some follow-up exams. They kind of check deeper into those situations. So there's not really one thing or another. It's, they have to go through the whole exam and once they get through the exam and they figure out everything is either treatable or not going to be a detriment, because honestly, they just want the the applicant to be safe and healthy for themselves, but also safe and healthy for those around them. Because it's not like, we're going to, I don't know, Walmart and getting a job and we're just we're just in a cashier next to each other because you're going to end up having situations in the military where it's just a lot more than the typical job. So I don't know if that answered, but it's it's kind of a what if if you get into that into that stage.

[00:12:23.965] - Melissa Corkum

No, that's helpful. I think there are maybe some misnomers or some things where people say, "Well, I heard if you have been on this medication" or "I heard, well, if you have this, it's an automatic no," right? So, I think that gives our families a chance to say, "Well, we can work together, we can go start the process and see." Obviously, there's no guarantees and obviously it's not just a camp experience,

right. Where we're trying to do, you know, this is leading to a real life situation where you could find yourself in a life or death situation with a bunch of other people. And so I think we understand why the military wants to evaluate who they have coming in, even though some of us are desperate as parents to just, you know, anything that just isn't going to cost us an arm and a leg, and that's going to provide our kids with some of the stability that you're talking about.

[00:13:08.275] - Colette Topfer

Right. The biggest thing is just talking, talking to the recruiter when you are at that stage and they can, they can work you they can walk you through the different scenarios. They know what's like up to the minute dis-qualifiers and what is OK and what needs waivers, and it's just a huge, huge process giving in.

[00:13:28.645] - Melissa Corkum

So you've talked a lot about this structure and routine, which I think as parents we know that our kids would thrive better in those situations. Our kids don't always agree with us, even though I think deep down inside, all kids really want to know where the boundaries are. They want a sense of stability. So many of our kids do thrive on routine, but it could be a plus or minus, right, so I feel like also in real life situations in the military, you have to also be able to think on your toes and be a little bit flexible. So what are your thoughts on our kids that really thrive on structure? How much flexibility, or, again, I know this kind of goes, there's not a black or white answer, but other kind of just some anecdotes or some general guidelines you can give to parents to think, you know, "Is my child a good fit for thinking about the military?"

[00:14:20.545] - Colette Topfer

Well, obviously, in the military, routine is huge because that's what we go through every day. It's as soon as you go into basic training, it's like, OK, everyone everyone wakes up together, everyone does PT together. Physical training, everyone does. They come back, they get washed up, they go to breakfast together. So every and everything, it's like Groundhog's Day. It's the same thing every day and they do that for a reason just because it kind of ingrains in your head. So if, like we were talking about before, if there's a situation where you are like, "oh, gosh," you're you're one of those one of those military situations where it could be life or death, all of a sudden it kicks in your head and you absolutely know the steps to go through what you need to do to either get out of the situation or get through the situation. Basic training, I talked about it. They do every day is just it's almost like it's exactly Groundhog's Day. I mean, that's basic is the perfect example of Groundhog Day. We're just the same thing every day. Even when you get to your duty station, it's kind of the same thing. You wake up, you go to PT, you go do your job, you come home. And then even even with me retired, I find myself I am a very routine oriented person. I just, I wake up, get all my stuff done, work out, I'll get ready for school, I teach all my school lessons. Even my kids are. They know to get up. So I think, I think you're better off if you are a huge fan of structure because you're not going to have to, I don't know, bend much or try to figure out how to conform to structure.

[00:16:10.105] - Melissa Corkum

You know, it's funny. I'm thinking about one of our sons who needs exactly what you're saying. He needs Ground Hog's Day because he doesn't critically think super well for himself. So he develops this muscle memory for what to do every day and that's where he kind of is his best. But I can't imagine him in this life or death military situation, so I'm thinking, where is the option where we just send our kids like basic training for the rest of their lives?

[00:16:35.655] - Colette Topfer

Yeah, no kidding. Basic training, I think every kid should go through some sort of basic training just to wake them up before they get either out of high school or as they get out of high school. They go through that and then they go into life.

[00:16:48.565] - Melissa Corkum

Well I have a kid who would just he would probably just thrive really well just in that every day. He wouldn't even have to move on.

[00:16:56.545] - Colette Topfer

Well, then he should join the army and be a drill sergeant. And then he would live that life every day, training, training, new troops coming in. That would be his life.

[00:17:05.635] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, we'll have to think on that. We reached out to our community at the adoption connection on Facebook and asked our folks for questions. And so one mom said, "Our son loves the idea of being in the military, but he also struggles with trusting and following authority. Oppositional defiance disorder hasn't been diagnosed, but that is what we sense. It seems like a crash and burn scenario. Any research experience of how kiddos with this type of background might do?" So it's kind of this situation where the kid likes the idea of the military, but doesn't also like to be told what to do.

[00:17:43.015] - Colette Topfer

Yeah, so I don't really have any experience with that, but he may thrive just because he thrives in a routine and maybe he thrives with working with other people. So I think the drill sergeants will help tremendously with that because, you know, initially they come off as really rough and rough around the edges and they, cause they're trying to break you of any bad habits or anything else, but by the time you get through basic training, you look at those drill sergeants and you're like, "oh, they do care about me. And they're doing this because they care about me." It just takes a little bit of time in the front to understand they're breaking you down to build you up again. As far as the disorder, I'm not sure. It just depends on how they will relate to the breaking down part to build them back up. So that would be, that would be the only thing I could say. But then if they get into basic training and they find out that they absolutely cannot deal with the, you know, authority or the yelling commands at them, there is, there is situations where some troops get discharged and they they call it failure to adapt. And there are some I didn't see too many. I mean, when I went through basic training, I think there was one out of my class that just could not could not get it, could not deal with it. And they worked with him and worked with him. And that is a very last resort as far as failure to adapt. But that is one of the things that they look at because if you cannot ultimately adapt to getting broken down and building back up, then it's probably not the, probably not the place for you.

[00:19:31.695] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. I also wonder if there's something about positive peer pressure of seeing a whole bunch of people go through it that changes the feeling of authority when it's like mom and dad. And also it's not an attachment figure doing this. And you and you have this whole culture of going with the flow that perhaps our kids would adapt, that it would be a different situation than what we see at home. Right. Where, you know, you ask your child to go make their bed and they're like, "you can't make me."

[00:20:09.245] - Colette Topfer

I think, I think I don't want to say peer pressure, but just seeing everyone working in a group also because I talk I talk to my cadets about that as well. When you're part of a group and everyone, it's teamwork. The ultimate thing is you're working, working together. You're trying to accomplish this mission. And maybe once they're part of this team that's bigger than they're probably typical three or four friends and they see 60 people out there doing the same thing, going through the same craziness, then they understand they're like, "OK, it's not just me, it's everyone. We can do it together." And then once they get to the end, and this is in ROTC as well, I talk about how was it. And even in the worst case scenarios, the the worst times when you think, "oh, this is the worst thing I've ever experienced," they always come up with great stories and they start laughing and they start going "you know what, that wasn't that bad." And then it just keeps building. So as they go through situations like that, they start to to grow. And they're a little more resilient as well.

[00:21:15.535] - Melissa Corkum

On the subject of recruiting and getting all those medical evaluations together, one member of our community asked, "I'd ask to what extent former physicians records could be redacted," and so she actually has, I guess, a situation where there was a comment by someone for a diagnosis that caused a lot of needing waivers and all of these things. Are you allowed to redact parts of medical history that you submit? Are they, they kinda want to see it all and go through that process of looking for waivers and the types of things and evaluating.

[00:21:55.175] - Colette Topfer

I think, the best, the best way to approach it is just to be honest and to show, show the medical records because I also I had a surgery before I even went into the military. And it was my senior year in high school and there was knee surgery. So I went into went into MEPS which is The Military Entrance Processing Station. That's where everyone goes through before they get into military. And I was sitting there getting ready for my physical and they're like, "oh, knee surgery." And I was like, "oh gosh, I'm not going to be able to get in the military. What is happening right now?" And they were like, "I don't know..." And they were reading through the stuff and ultimately they read through everything. But then they do their own, their own exam to kind of make sure that things are OK now. And mind you, that was two, two years after I had the surgery, I joined the military, and so they went through all the X-rays, they went through all the paperwork, then they did their own exam and then they did their own X-rays again. And they said, OK, you're fine. So you can you can go in. But they do want to see all of that. I wouldn't recommend trying to hide anything, just being honest is the is the best way to do it, because you can always get get them to do another exam to make sure everything is is on track.

[00:23:22.035] - Melissa Corkum

A lot of our families have adopted older kids internationally. You know, again, thinking through actual military exercises, you know, this almost seems silly, but maybe it happens. Are there options for language interpreters, for kids coming like, ESL kids, kids coming in who English isn't their first language or are there accommodations for that?

[00:23:49.405] - Colette Topfer

So I had to do a little research on this one because I was curious also, and I never was an actual recruiter, I was in recruiting, but I was an officer, so I kind of managed recruiters. But as far as a foreign language, so the big things require, and I'm sure the the kids are citizens at that point, but even if they're not a citizen, so you'll have to have a permanent resident card. You have to live in the US or the territories. So the territories count as the states as well. But the big thing is, is you do have to speak, read and write English fluently. And there, there are reasons for that. They have to make sure that all the, all the applicants are on the same standard. So they don't want to cater to different things because if you cater at that point, once they get in, it's going to be a totally different game because they're not going to be able to cater to you know, specifically Russian or specifically. Because there are a lot of languages.

[00:24:53.615] - Melissa Corkum

Right, yeah.

[00:24:54.025] - Colette Topfer

I have learned there's so many languages out there, so they don't they don't cater. But I did think of a way if that student that spoke Russian, which is an awesome language because I was in my battalion military intelligence battalion commander, we have linguists in our units. So if that student decided he was going to brush up on his English, and I know that's his second language, but he could use his Russian as a huge asset getting into the military, depending on how he scored on exams, depending on how he performed, he could qualify to maybe be a Russian linguist, which is that is a huge job in the military. And they don't find a lot of natural born Russian Russian speakers to to be a linguist. Usually they find people that are good at learning different languages and then they send them away and they get immersed with this language school that's like a year and a half to two years. And then they come back and they're speaking Russian, which is not their natural language. But that could be motivation for him to learn English so he can use his Russian.

[00:26:10.225] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. Is ROTC a good program even if our kids maybe are not thinking military as the end goal? Can they get into an ROTC program in their community and knowing kind of going in, that they're probably not going to want to enlist at the other end?

[00:26:32.105] - Colette Topfer

Oh, absolutely. That's one of the biggest things that I put out in the in the class. As soon as they come

in the first day, the the biggest misnomer is "if you're an ROTC, you have to join the military." It is, that's the furthest thing from the truth. Honestly, there is no requirement to join the military if you're in ROTC one year, two years, three years, or four years. Now, if you do join the military after your four years of Junior ROTC, you can go in as private first class, which is an E3 instead of E1. So that's a little bit of incentive, but I tell all the kids, I said, "The the mission of Junior ROTC is teaching students to be better citizens." So we are teaching them leadership skills. We are teaching them how to survive in life and that everyone needs that. So you don't have to be in the military. You don't have to go join the Marines, the Air Force, anything like that. It's it's good for everyone. So, yeah, absolutely. I would recommend it to any kid in high school. And there are programs, there's Marine Corps programs, there's Air Force programs, there's Army, and there's Navy. And so in our district, there's only two Army programs. There's three Marine Corps programs, one Air Force, and two Navy. So they're definitely out there. You just have to search for them.

[00:27:59.585] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, what are the best ways to find those? And do you have to be in the school, like other community programs? Kind of like you join Boy Scouts pulls from a couple of different schools. I know you work specifically in a school setting. Like how do we as families kind of connect with a program that our child might be eligible to join?

[00:28:21.515] - Colette Topfer

So you can, you can just literally you can Google Army Junior ROTC programs and a list of a bazillion different programs will come up across the United States. The thing is, is that I wish I wish junior ROTC programs were magnet programs to where if you didn't have Junior ROTC around you, you could go to that school that has the program. I think we're trying to work in that direction. But right now, it's if you go to that school, you can be a part of that program. So we don't we don't actually go out. I do go out to middle schools that feed into my high school and I try to talk to the eighth graders because a lot of kids in eighth grade have no idea what that is. And I want to join the military and I'm like, "you don't have to." And then I tell them a little bit about it. And then they go, "oh, I kind of like that." So it is just kind of word of mouth. It's kind of finding it. If you happen to be in an area where there's a program, it's fantastic.

[00:29:21.495] - Melissa Corkum

If you had one thing you'd really want listeners to take away as they're thinking about their kids, what would you want them to remember?

[00:29:31.515] - Colette Topfer

It's funny because I have, there's a lot of kids in Junior ROTC that have no idea what they want, but then we have some kids that come in and they want to do what their parents want. It bothers me because they feel like they're forced to maybe do something that they don't want to do. So I would say as as a parent and I am a parent, I have two kids of my own. You have to find with their strong suits are you have to find what they love to do and then help them develop that and find what they love to do and not try to push expectations or push something that you may have wanted to do on to them. And just let them discover who they are and thrive in that because that's ultimately where they're going to do the best.

[00:30:21.925] - Melissa Corkum

We talk a lot about strength based parenting here, and so that's a good word because I think sometimes we get desperate as parents watching kind of, out of fear, watching the decisions our kids are making or what they have propensities to. And we might get really attached to an option like an ROTC program or the military and think "this is the thing that's going to save them. This is the thing that's going to help them not crash and burn." And we want to be protective so they don't have to kind of learned the hard way. But you're right, without that self starting, the purpose of that internal drive for something that you are gifted at. It's hard to get on board with that.

[00:31:05.485] - Colette Topfer

And the ROTC programs can help and we can help them find that. We also have classes on finding the best career and understanding your strengths and understa- I mean, we literally teach all the good

stuff. I wish I had a class like that. See, I didn't even take Junior ROTC when I was in high school because I was playing sports and doing the other stuff. So when I joined the military, that was my start of military experience, so.

[00:31:33.205] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, it's almost like ROTC, it's like all the life skills we want our kids to have. I mean, it's just like basic life skills.

[00:31:39.515] - Colette Topfer

Yep. No, absolutely, and that's the military. That's the military in a nutshell, is they try to teach you how to be a better citizen. And that's everything we teach is hoping that you will be a productive member of society.

[00:31:54.385] - Melissa Corkum

Now, Colette, you do work privately with some students outside of your school job. What does that look like?

[00:32:02.215] - Colette Topfer

So I started up a mentoring and accountability coaching, I guess, business. And I guess because it's my it's my passion, I really love helping kids figure out what they want to do and how they want to get there. And sometimes it's important to have an adult figure that's outside of your circle of trust but still has a vested interest in them doing well. And maybe they'll feel like they trust that person, but just kind of pushing them. Gently but strongly to go into a direction, make decisions and get their get their life together and get ready to to start performing as an adult. So I started doing that, like I said, the the girl that's in basic training right now, I mean, we would talk every week on on zoom and on face time and is just saying, "OK, what are you doing now?" or "You have this goal, what did you do this week to get closer to that goal?" and just kind of being there as that little, she called me "the hook." She goes, "Whenever I wanted to make a decision, I would always look around and make sure, what would what would Col Topfer say? And if I saw the hook coming at me, I knew I better not make that decision." So it was it was one of those things I try to try to teach them to think on their own, be a hard driver, never give up and just keep going for what they want.

[00:33:28.745] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I can imagine that's a valuable resource to families. And you also work with someone who does a strength based assessment first. So when the folks work with you, one of the first things you even find out about them is what are their strengths? So you can kind of use that as a starting place for pointing them in the right direction.

[00:33:52.445] - Colette Topfer

Yep, Lori talks them through her work at careers. She talks them through this. There's a two two stage two class process. She even worked with my son, who is ten, and she finds out what their strong suits are, what they're going to be good at, all of those valuable things that they may not even know about themselves. I feel like she has this sixth sense about what's what's that what that person's good at. It was kind of weird to even watch when she was doing it with my son because I was like, wow, she is really accurate. And then the next stage is they develop like a seven step plan on how you're going to get to that goal. What are the things you need to start taking now in school? What are some of the things you need to do for volunteer work? You know, seven steps to get there and then they come to me. We talk through, you know, your strengths. What are the seven steps? How are we going to get there? And then I'm there to say, "OK, what are we doing? Well, what's the next step?" I'm not going to do it for them, but I'm going to help them along so that they can achieve it for themselves.

[00:34:58.405] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, what a great gift to families. Well, Colette, thank you so much for joining us for this episode. It's been really helpful. I've learned a ton about ROTC. I'm thinking, "Hmm. I wonder what's going on up here at Harford County for our son." So thank you so much for your, one, passion for young people and helping them find the directions and, two, your willingness to share it with everyone.

[00:35:21.205] - Colette Topfer

Oh, absolutely. This has been awesome. So I appreciate you and Lisa having me on and look forward to sharing more in the future.

[00:35:36.755] - Lisa Qualls

You know, I appreciated a lot of things about this interview with Colette because honestly, I knew almost nothing and so I learned a lot by listening. But one of the things that definitely leapt out at me was when she talked about how, you know, we know that many of our kids need structure to feel safe. They need that high structure environment, of course, accompanied with nurture, but they thrive in structure. And hearing her talk about the structure of the military and how it can really help young people was really sort of eye-opening to me. I could see how it would be a really great environment for some some youth.

[00:36:22.925] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I found that mix of structure she talked about with the mix of community that like this joint sense of purpose. And I think I think we all have a lot of misnomers about the military, thanks to Hollywood, I'm sure. And so it really appreciated her real life experience in helping transition students into the military. So if you would like to connect with Colette, you can head to the show notes for this episode at theadoptionconnection.com/117

[00:36:57.695] - Lisa Qualls

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @theadoptionconnection.

[00:37:05.315] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a quick review over on iTunes. It will help us reach more moms who may be feeling alone.

[00:37:15.485] - Lisa Qualls

And remember, until next week, you're a good mom, doing good work and we're here for you.

[00:37:22.665] - Melissa Corkum

The music for the podcast is called New Day and was created by Lee Rosevear.