

COMMUNITY CORNER

Pre-trick-or-treating safety drill could reduce Halloween horror

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

Ghosts and goblins will take to the streets of Fort Riley from 6 to 8 p.m. Halloween night in search of treats. Before the fun begins, I encourage you to take the time to think about keeping everyone safe this Halloween weekend.

When picking out costumes for the kids, make sure the costume fits correctly. Trailing fabrics can pose a trip hazard. Masks can impair vision, so if your child is wearing a mask, make sure the eyeholes are large enough and they have proper ventilation. Check the weather forecast. If the past few weeks' weather is any indication, it's going to be chilly. Make sure your child's costume is warm, or big enough to fit over long underwear and other warm clothes. Also make sure your child's costume is visible in the dark. While black may be the scary color of choice, it's even scarier to think of drivers not being able to see trick-or-treaters once the sun goes down. Also, give your kids a flashlight to ensure they can see where they are headed.

While small children should only trick or treat with an adult, older children should be aware of the rules of the road to help make their night safe and fun. Tell your children to stick to the sidewalks. Head down one side of the street and up the other. Cross at street corners and never between parked cars. Parents play an enormous role in



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ensuring their children's safety. Here are some additional tips from our Installation Safety Office:

- Before trick or treaters embark on their night of fun, parents should know what route their children will take and who will accompany them.
- Children should be encouraged to travel in familiar areas, carry a flashlight, only visit houses that are well lit and never enter houses of people they do not know.
- An adult or older youth should supervise young children at all times.
- To prevent encountering hazards that might cause trips and falls – the leading cause of Halloween-related injuries – instruct children never to cut across yards, but to use sidewalks when traveling from house to house. If a sidewalk is not available, they should walk, not run, on the left side of the road where approaching traffic is visible.
- After trick or treaters return home, parents should inspect all treats for anything suspicious. Items that cause doubt should be properly disposed off.
- To help parents with their candy inspection duties, Irwin Army Community Hospital will provide free candy X-rays from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Radiology Department on the first floor of the hospital. Hospital staff encourages

parents to make a visual inspection of the candy to look for torn, frayed or damaged packaging. The X-ray will screen candy for metal objects. For more information about candy X-rays, call Ron Knight at 785-239-7473.

For more Halloween fun on post, make sure to stop at the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers' annual haunted house. This year BOSS will haunt Building 7227 on Custer Hill from 7 to 11 p.m. Oct. 29 to 31; Picnic Military Housing will host trick or treating from 5 to 7 p.m. Oct. 31 at its neighborhood offices. In preparation for Halloween, learn about Fort Riley's haunting past at the Historical and Archaeological Society of Fort Riley's ghost tours from 3 to 7 p.m. Oct. 25. Custer Hill Lanes will host a Halloween party from 4 to 10 p.m. Oct. 31 that will include a best costume competition and pumpkin carving contest.

For those adults going out for a night on the town or maybe just fun at a friend's house, be sure to plan for a way home if you are going to be drinking. Designate a driver before you go out, and stick to your plan. Holidays are for having fun and enjoying time with family and friends. Enjoy yourselves and stay safe. If you have questions about Halloween safety, call the Installation Safety Office at 239-2514.

If you would like to comment on this article or suggest a topic to be covered in the Community Corner, e-mail riley.post.newspaper@conus.army.mil.



TALKING TO TEENS

Teenagers' face higher risk of becoming victims to domestic violence than adults

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October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. With much of the attention focusing on spousal abuse, teen dating violence also is a concern. According to Dr. Sandra Stith, an expert in domestic violence at Kansas State University, approximately 25 percent of high school students and 30 percent of college students are victims of dating abuse.

When comparing rates of adult domestic violence to those of teenagers, teens are at the greatest risk. In fact, females between the ages of 16-24 are the most vulnerable population to violence from an intimate partner. The rate at which this group experiences violence is almost triple the national average.

While all this information may sound scary to many parents, they may have a difficult time imagining their child experiencing dating violence. Parents can help their teens by recognizing the warning signs. Knowing questions to ask, what to look for and how to handle the situation is most helpful. In many cases, seeking outside support from a trained professional should be the next step in dealing with this serious issue.

While males also may be victims, the majority of those being harmed in dating relationships are females. Some behavioral changes you may see in your teenager if she is involved in a violent relationship include becoming very sad and emotional. If the boyfriend is constantly calling, does she have to call him back immediately? Does he ask her what she is doing or where she is each time they are on the phone? You also may notice the boyfriend's jealousy in ways that include isolating her from her friends and activities she used to enjoy. Other warning signs include a suspicion the boyfriend abuses alcohol and drugs, as a strong correlation exists between substance abuse and intimate partner violence.

Some questions you may want to

ask yourself or your teen about dating relationships could include:

- Does your date use anger, intimidation or jealousy to control your behavior? This can include trying to control how you dress, what you eat, who you talk to or with whom you spend time. Another example of this would be destroying property.
- Does your partner call you vulgar names? This can include intentionally disrespecting you in front of others, criticizing you, insulting your friends or family or making you feel nothing you do is right.
- Does your partner force you to drop or stop activities you enjoy?
- This can include wanting you to quit after-school activities, not wanting you to spend time with your friends, not wanting you to go to study groups.
- Does your partner make threats or physically harm you? Does your partner force you to do things you do not want to do? These can include forcing or manipulating you to drink, do drugs or participate in sexual activities with them.

A good time to have the conversation is when no other people are around. This prevents the teenager from becoming self-conscious. To have a productive conversation, be supportive. Act like a parent figure not a friend. While teenagers may act as if they do not want anything to do with their parents, they need a parent to help them navigate life. Here are some great conversation starters to help you know your teenager better: These may help you determine if the relationship is a healthy one.

- How are things going? Ask what "going together," "dating" and "seeing each other" mean to your teen.
- What are your friends' dating relationships like? Here may be your chance to define abusive or violent relationships with your teenager. Compare your definition with theirs.
- Have you seen any kind of abusive behavior between two people who are going out? Often boys in our society are told they must be strong and in control to be a man. All too often this behavior is excused. Your teenager may believe in these societal stereotypes.
- Why do you think someone

would hurt the person they are dating? This may help you get a sense of what your teen is learning in your home, in school, from friends or the media.

- Why might a person stay in a relationship when they are being mistreated? Listen to their discussion and provide feedback. Keep in mind the teenager's self-esteem may be low, and their need for peer acceptance high.
- What could you do if your friend is threatened or a victim of abuse? Do you know where to go for help? This will help you get a sense as to whether your teenager knows who is available to support them with the situation.

Ask these few questions often: How is your relationship going? What do you like about your relationship? What do you dislike about your relationship? This lets your child know you care and starts a conversation. It also may provide clues as to what type of relationship your teenager is engaged in.

It is important to keep in mind teenagers are full of hormones and roller-coastering emotions, and dating relationships can last only a few hours or span a few years. Keep communication open to help protect your adolescent from negative or dangerous relationships. Your teenager is becoming a young adult, and this is the key time to start having grown-up discussion about life, love and security with them.

We were all once teenagers; remember the growing pains of becoming an adult? You may not agree with their actions, decisions or choices but continuing to provide support and a nurturing environment are important components in developing productive members of society.

Always remember adults are their child's first model of how to interact in relationships. If you are a single parent, you model what it means to be single, to date and how to care for yourself. If you are a parent in a marital relationship, your child uses your model for clues as to what is normal or OK in an intimate relationship. Children practice and do what they have been shown in the home. Above friends, media and schools, children follow their parents' example.