

COMMUNITY CORNER

Garrison commander advocates for protection of military children

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

As the Fort Riley garrison commander, I promise to advocate for the protection of our military children, provide the resources our staff needs to combat child abuse and encourage prevention of, not reaction to, to these tough situations.

In Fiscal Year 2009, there were almost 80 substantiated child abuse cases at Fort Riley. Throughout the Army that number was 2,681. In the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2010, there were 16 substantiated cases at Fort Riley.

The Month of the Military Child is full of activities celebrating our children. As we celebrate, let's not forget these numbers. Each number is more than that—it is a child who wasn't protected. During the Month of the Military Child, let's celebrate our children and reflect on the promises we can make to keep them safe and healthy.

As a neighbor or a friend, you can help out a stressed parent who needs a break. Offer to watch their children while they run errands or take time for themselves. Remind them it's OK to ask for help. If you suspect child abuse or neglect, report your suspicions to the military police by calling 785-239-MPMP (6767).

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Welfare Information Gateway, the following may be signs of child abuse or neglect:

The child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems



Parker Rome | PGST

Garrison commander Col. Kevin Brown shakes hands with a child at CVSS's pancake breakfast April 10.

As a parent, recognize your limitations and know that it's OK to seek help. Many of our Families live far from their extended Families. Consider the Army your extended Family and take advantage of all of the support that Family offers.

Explore the resources offered through Army Community Service. Take advantage of the many parenting classes offered. Increasing your knowledge as a parent not only makes your life easier, but it helps your children be the best they can be and builds resilience in our community.

As a commander or Family Readiness Group leader, take advantage of the classes offered through ACS. Get to know your Families and help bring classes to them. The Family Advocacy Program provides commander and troop education, parent education programs that include free child care, child safety classes and stress management classes. To arrange for a class, call FAP at 785-239-9435 or visit the ACS page at www.riley.army.mil under Family Services.

What promise can you make to our children? Together we can prevent child abuse.

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

As a parent, recognize your limitations and know that it's OK to seek help. Many of our Families live far from their extended Families. Consider the Army your extended Family and take advantage of all of the support that Family offers.

Explore the resources offered through Army Community Service. Take advantage of the many parenting classes offered. Increasing your knowledge as a parent not only makes your life easier, but it helps your children be the best they can be and builds resilience in our community.

As a commander or Family Readiness Group leader, take advantage of the classes offered through ACS. Get to know your Families and help bring classes to them. The Family Advocacy Program provides commander and troop education, parent education programs that include free child care, child safety classes and stress management classes. To arrange for a class, call FAP at 785-239-9435 or visit the ACS page at www.riley.army.mil under Family Services.

What promise can you make to our children? Together we can prevent child abuse.

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

FAMILY OUTREACH

Earth Day presents a perfect chance for Families to spend time together

By Erin Bishop
K-STATE RESEARCH
AND EXTENSION

Earth Day is April 22, and it will be the 40th anniversary. One major celebration occurring at Fort Riley is the opening of the community gardens, which supports the concepts of eating locally to minimize one's carbon footprint. Also, your kids will probably learn about Earth Day in school.

But what can you do at home to continue their involvement and understanding of Earth Day and the importance of protecting our environment for future generations?

Below are some ideas that can be done at home—as a whole Family—to help preserve and protect our Earth; after all, it's the only one we've got.

HISTORY OF EARTH DAY

In 1969, Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin developed the idea for Earth Day. Nelson announced the Earth Day concept at a conference in Seattle in which he invited the entire nation to get involved.

From there the idea spread like a wildfire. The responses came from coast to coast, and the grassroots movement toward a healthier, more sustainable Earth began.

The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970. After Earth Day, in 1970, 25 percent of the nation stated protecting the environment was important, a 2,500 percent increase from 1969.

This spawned a new generation of Earth-friendly events, agencies and laws. These include the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Improve-

ment Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Other key developments include the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency.

That's certainly a lot to celebrate. But where do we begin? Taking small steps and involving the whole Family are major keys to making this initiative happen at home. Here are a few suggested activities for Families. After all, a better Earth starts at home.

INVOLVING THE WHOLE FAMILY

Recycle monitor: Assign each child a weekly duty of being the recycle monitor. Each child can take turns making sure each Family member is recycling items rather than putting them in the trash. This gives them a chance to be "in charge" and take responsibility. Children thrive on accountability.

Make a recycling poster: Work together as a Family to design a poster that shows which items can be recycled. This is a great time for Family bonding and to encourage creativity in children. It also is a great reference tool for all Family members and guests to know what can and cannot be recycled.

Assign age-appropriate recycling chores: Younger children can be responsible for rinsing out plastic containers. Older children can take care of tin cans and glass. Make sure to monitor for safety. This also



Erin Bishop

helps you keep up on recycled items.

Money for aluminum: Reward children for their recycling efforts by giving them the few dollars gained from recycling cans. This can be like an allowance that does not cost you a thing. Encourage them to find ways to spend their money on environmentally friendly products.

Decorate recycling bins: Put a recycling box or bin in each room of your home. Issue each a child a room or set of rooms in which they can decorate a box or can for recycling. Don't forget bedrooms and bathrooms as well.

Take the lunch packaging challenge: Encourage the whole Family to brainstorm ways to reduce packaging waste in lunches. Have children find different solutions to this problem. This also may get you some extra help in the evenings and mornings.

Compost: Composting is one of the best ways to reduce our waste. Teach children about worms, soil, and gardening through this process. To get a fact sheet on starting a compost bin with your children go to www.fortriley.ksu.edu and click the "Family Life" link.

Have a container garden: Teaching children about where food comes from not only decreases our carbon footprint by eliminating the chemicals, fertilizers and gas used to grow and transport our fruits and vegetables but also encourages them to try new, healthy foods. This is a fun project the children can be in charge of. For more information about container gardens, come to the Fort Riley K-State Research and Extension Office for

See EARTH DAY, page 18