

COMMUNITY CORNER

Take time this week to thank spouses, teachers, public service workers

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

This week's calendar is covered with weeklong blocks highlighting observances. May 3 through 7 is Teacher Appreciation Week and Public Service Recognition Week, and May 7 is Military Spouse Appreciation Day. Take time out this week to say "thank you."

SPOUSES

Years ago the saying was if the Army wanted you to have a spouse they would have issued you one. Today, the Army recognizes the importance of military spouses and all they do.

Army spouses hold full-time jobs. Some are spouses and

Soldiers, too. Some are stay-at-home parents. Some volunteer in their communities. Spouses help each other out. They pack care packages. They hold down the fort while their Soldiers are deployed. Army spouses can pretty much do it all, and for that we thank them.

Without the support of our Families, our fighting force wouldn't be where it is at today. Our Families have been constants through years of sustained conflict. These years haven't been without hardship, but the Army has pledged its support to help Soldiers and



Col. Brown

Families remain strong. In 2007 Army leaders signed the Army Family Covenant which pledged support to our military Families commensurate with their Soldiers' levels of service. Since then, the covenant has provided support for Family programs, physical and mental health care, housing, education, child care and employment opportunities for spouses.

In this week's newspaper, several spouses, out of the thousands stationed with their Soldiers at Fort Riley, have shared some of their experiences with us. Log on to Fort Riley's page on Facebook to share your own experiences. A topic, "Military Spouse Appreciation Day," was created under the Discussion tab. Share your stories of hu-

mor and challenge, how you've overcome difficulties, how you support the nation and why it is important to you. Or, post a note of appreciation for your spouse.

TEACHERS

Another group being recognized this week is our teachers – many of whom also fall into the spouse category. Take time to thank your children's teachers for all that they do.

Our teachers spend a large part of each week with our children. They help shape them into upstanding citizens and help them through the many transitions that come with being military children.

During the week, many of our area teachers will be honored at award ceremonies and

with special activities at school. This little bit of recognition is the least we can do to show our teachers thanks for what they do.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Fort Riley employs around 4,000 federal employees. Many of those employees have not only spent years serving as public servants, but also spent years before that serving their country in the military.

Civilian employees provide the continuity that helps sustain this post and our military efforts. As the Civilian Corps Creed states, they "provide stability and continuity during war and peace." Our Army civilians work alongside Soldiers every day helping to support the mission and the Army's

Families.

You may notice signs in some of the workplaces across post which show the number of years worked by our employees. When you see these take the time to stop and add your thanks for a job well done.

Appreciation days and times for recognition seem to be a constant at Fort Riley. The reason for that is because we have a lot to appreciate. While our appreciation and thanks are constant, these observances give us an extra reminder to show our thanks. How can you show your thanks this month?

To comment on this article or suggest a topic for Community Corner, e-mail rile.post.news@perc.com.us.army.mil.

SPOUSE STORIES | MILITARY SPOUSES SHARE STORIES ABOUT ARMY LIFE

Victory 5 spouses answer 'How do you do it?' with 'How could we not?'

VICTORY 5 SPOUSES

"I had cast my lot with a Soldier, and where he was, was home to me."

—Martha Summerhayes, frontier Army wife at the turn of the century.

Those of us who have chosen to spend our lives with a Soldier are often perplexed when people ask us the inevitable question: "How do you do it?" How could we not? At some point in our lives we fell in love with a Soldier.

And by doing so, we dedicated ourselves to our country. We left all that we knew behind when we embarked on this great adventure of Army life.

Did we realize what we were getting into? Surely not. But now that we're here, we consider it an honor to be able

to support our country in the way that we do.

We haul our kids and our pets and our furniture around the world. We start over at each duty station, with a new job, a new school, a new home.

We give selflessly of our

time to our communities both on and off post, through volunteer work, churches, neighborhood organizations and countless other ways.

We reach out to military spouses around us, forming an extended Family that is often stronger than the relationships

we have with our own blood relatives.

And while the rest of the country goes about its business, we send our husbands off to war again and again.

This is our life. See **VICTORY 5**, page 20

Strength tested when husband, son deployed simultaneously

By Mary Cook
MILITARY SPOUSE

Strength is measured in many ways depending upon the challenges at hand.

I think of all the strong Army women I have known. The general's wife with her husband and two young boys in Baghdad. The colonel's wife with her three sons in Iraq. And the sergeant's wife struggling to handle three kids and a full-time job while her husband is in Afghanistan for the third time.

I've never counted myself among their numbers – until now. I had never faced a de-

ployment until last year when I sent my son and husband to Iraq.

Talk about life changing on a dime.

The real meaning of strength among Army Families is in the support we give each other. This has been demonstrated to me over and over again with the concern and compassion expressed to me by family, friends and total strangers. How do we, Army Families, do it?

First and foremost, we have no choice. It is what it is. The only choice we have is in how we handle the never-ending challenges. The Army has worked hard to provide



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a multitude of support services for us. Everything from free babysitting to military discounts through the Blue Star Program. There's a lot

See **COOK**, page 20

Dual-military Family has double commitment to Army, each other

By Capt. Kimberly Decker
MILITARY SPOUSE

Serving in the Army as part of a dual-military couple has both its rewards and its challenges. All married Soldiers share a large component of their Army commitment with their spouse, but for dual-military couples this commitment comes double.

I am married to Capt. Tim Decker of 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. We have a 2-year-old son and are expecting our second child in October. Tim is serving as a company commander in 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, and I am fin-

ishing my company command at MEDDAC.

We are often asked how we manage to juggle dual military service, in particular simultaneous company commands. After seven years of happy marriage, we have grown accustomed to this question, but we have yet to come up with an elegant answer.

It all comes down to our choice to embrace the Army as a lifestyle and our choice to recognize and embrace all of the associated rewards. There are many aspects of our lives that require a little bit of extra sacrifice, but those sacrifices are well rewarded with some unique opportunities.



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All Soldiers face a significant amount of separation from their Families, but dual-military couples tend to experience this to an even greater

See **DECKER**, page 17

Phone call from Baghdad turns into spouse's worst nightmare

By Rochelle Hooper
MILITARY SPOUSE

In 2005, when I was still an Army girlfriend, my best friend's husband violated operational security in what he thought was an act of true friendship. This simple violation of OPSEC became my worst nightmare, and possibly the worst thing that ever happened to me.

It was just five days after R&R when this happened. I had just ended a crappy conversation with my boyfriend. No, not because we were fighting – which wasn't even possible with the lack of communication we had during the

deployment – but because of the connection itself. Frustrated and restless, I fled to the apartment building next door to visit with my best friend.

She was always there to support me through my anxiety attacks and over-emotional outbursts, and I loved her for it. Her husband was in the same unit as John, my boyfriend, though they worked very different hours. John did patrols while his friend sat at a desk listening to radio coms and playing solitaire on his iPod. Very different hours; very different jobs.

John's friend called his wife at 2 a.m. from Iraq on a satellite phone. We had both fallen



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asleep during our usual horror movie marathon and woke to the sound of her phone ringing. She stared blankly at me while her husband's low voice

See **HOOPER**, page 20

Job as readiness support assistant helps spouse cope with lifestyle

By Anthony B.H. Meyer
MILITARY SPOUSE

Born in Red Wing, Minn., I went on to attend Dakota County Technical College in Rosemount, Minn., earning my associate degree in accounting in 2001. It was in 2001 that I met my wife to be, Trisha, while she was attending the University of Wisconsin - La-Crosse. In May, 2002, she was commissioned into the Army as an Air Defense Artillery second lieutenant. She departed in August to Fort Bliss, Texas for schooling – the first of many separations for us.

While she attended school, I served as the staff accountant for a child care resource and referral agency in Rochester, Minn. In January 2003, we were married.

Two weeks later, with no honeymoon to celebrate our new life together, Trisha left for the first of two deployments to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. During the deployment, I continued my accounting ca-



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reer in Minnesota. Following Trisha's return from deployment in May 2003, I began my job search in the El Paso, Texas area.

Though it meant taking See **MEYER**, page 18

Newlyweds learn about military life, tackle deployment together

By Katherine Rosario
MILITARY SPOUSE

When I met my husband three years ago, the Army was the last thing on my mind.

I grew up in a city where the military was something you read about in a school book, but were never part of. No one I knew was enlisted in the military or had been to war.

When I met my husband in college, I knew he was majoring in finance and assumed he would get a desk job at a big firm after graduation.

I didn't know he got up every morning for physical training with ROTC or that

he was going to become an officer.

I didn't know he had previously been deployed to Iraq and intended on making his military service a career.

And I didn't know then that I would fall in love and marry into a life so different that I would feel like an outsider when I visited my hometown.

A year after we met, Gil asked me to marry him.

I had already thought long and hard about the sacrifices we would have to make during our marriage. Would he be home a year and then deployed a year for most of our marriage? Would he expect me to be by his side for every



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military function? Would I have to agree with everything the Army stood for? Could I balance his life and my career?

But I had faith in our relationship and was confident

See **ROSARIO**, page 17

Retired Soldier reflects upon time as dual-military couple with kids

By Brenda Werner
MILITARY SPOUSE

I was told many years ago by our local priest – and of course my religion teacher (one in the same) – that when we grow up, we have specific obligations to this country.

He said when we turned 18 we had the right to vote, and we should exercise it. He told the men they needed to register for selective service. He said we needed to tithe 10 percent and thank God for all he has given us. He also had obligations for parents to raise their children in the faith and that everyone needed to serve their country in some way.

So, joining the Army had

always been in my plans. I thought it would be a one obligation tour, and I would be done. However, as things change, I found my better half; hence we are now dual military. No one told me about those challenges that would be unique all to themselves that dual military couples have – and more so when you add children.

Since we were "dual-military" for over half my career, there are countless stories to tell about – but probably the ones with the lasting impact were after our children were born.

I can certainly empathize and sympathize with Families in today's Army that have children and are dual military and face the deployment cycle that we



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have been doing for nearly a decade. Everyone has to give.

Never in my wildest dreams would I think that we would both have to leave our children; especially for an entire year or longer! As a mother – this broke See **WERNER**, page 20