

COMMUNITY CORNER

Dads Make a Difference Month activities celebrate military fathers

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

Military dads face unique challenges. They may miss out on birthdays, birthdays, holidays and other milestones due to deployments and training requirements. During June, Fort Riley's Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation will celebrate our dads for all they do, and offer them numerous opportunities to strengthen their family bonds during Dads Make a Difference Month.

Help kick off Dads Make a Difference Month during the Fathers and Family Picnic and Field Day from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 5 at the Fortyeth sports field near Rally Point. Bring the whole family to enjoy games, food and activities for families with children of all ages. In case of inclement weather, this event will be

held at Army Community Service, Building 7264.

A pool party is scheduled from noon to 2 p.m. June 17 at Custer Hill Pool, Army Community Service is doing all the cooking, you just need to bring the kiddos, towels, pool toys and sunscreen. RSVP for this event before June 8 to Laurie McCauley at 785-239-1861 or Toianne Taylor at 785-239-5777.

June 20, bring dad out to enjoy a barbecue-style brunch at Riley's Conference Center from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Brunch will include pork ribs and barbecue beef as well as full breakfast and lunch buffers, a salad bar, dessert bar, and waffle and omelet stations. The brunch is \$13.95 for adults, \$6.95 for children and free



Col. Brown

for those under 5 years of age. Make reservations today by calling 785-784-1000.

Toward the end of Dads Make a Difference Month, a father and daughter tea party is scheduled from 9 to 11 a.m. at the ACS Annex, Building 1020 off of Huebner Road. This activity is designed to promote father and daughter interaction through story time, crafts and music. Each family will receive the book "Miss Spider's Tea Party" and their own tea cups and saucers to take home. Space is limited at this event, so call Erin Bishop or Sara Mierzner at 785-239-9435 to reserve your spot.

Besides these events, classes will be held throughout the month to help our military fathers be the best they can be when it comes to fatherhood.

June classes:
• Dads Boot Camp – 5 to 7 p.m. June 1, ACS, Building 7264. This workshop will pre-

pare men to be fathers and care for their babies and new moms.

• Love and Logic Parenting – 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. June 3, 10 and 17, ACS, Building 7264. This class will present a parenting approach that allows children to grow through their mistakes and help children learn the logical consequences of their choices.

• 24/7 Dads Workshop – 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. June 15-16, ACS, Building 7264. This class covers the importance of dads being involved with their children physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Children are encouraged to attend the final afternoon session for an interactive session with their dads.

• Letters from Dad – 2 to 4 p.m. June 21, ACS, Building 7264. Learn how to communicate your thoughts, hopes and concerns to your loved ones. Join the chaplains and the

Family Advocacy Program for this workshop. You will learn to write and say things you have always wanted to say, but just didn't know how.

• Long-distance Relationships – 6 to 8 p.m. June 22, ACS, Building 7264. Come experience this unique opportunity for Families to share ideas and provide support. Separate activities will be provided for adults and children. Make a care package to send to your Soldier, and learn ways to stay connected to your loved one.

To find out more about any of these classes, or to reserve your spot, call ACS at 785-239-9435. Walk-in also will be welcome.

The final event to close out the month will be the Dads Make a Difference Month Fun Night Close Out and EFMP Kickoff from 4 to 6 p.m. June 30 at McCormick Park. This event will feature an array of Family oriented educational

activities. Come enjoy the fun with dad and help kick off July's Army Strong with Special Needs campaign.

So while our military dads may have tough jobs – at work and at home, Fort Riley fully supports its Families to help them be the best they can be. This month we're are highlighting dads and their contributions to our Families, but every month ACS and other post organizations offer their support to our Families.

Call or stop by ACS at any time to find out about the numerous ways we offer support for all kinds of Families. ACS is located in Building 7264 on Custer Hill. Find out more about its services at www.riley.army.mil or call 785-239-9435.

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

Army Wife Network radio hosts visit Fort Riley for 2-day seminar

By Deikaya Greer
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Military spouses at Fort Riley were treated to something special when hosts Tara Crooks and Startlett Henderson of the radio show Army Wife Network sponsored the Spouse Field Exercise: Priceless Packages seminar May 20 and 21 at Riley's Conference Center.

The two-day event provided information, networking and fun for spouses. Crooks and Henderson greeted each guest with a goodie bag filled with items both for the spouses and their Soldier.

The seminar was geared toward spouses of deployed Soldiers. It focused on the need of "battle buddies" and how having a friend that understands the life of a military spouse is important to survival.

"We all need to make sure that we have a battle buddy because we want someone that has been through the same things," Henderson said. "That way, they can understand how we are feeling."

The duo kept the crowd entertained by sharing their own personal stories of success and failure. They also encouraged attendees to mingle and get to know those sitting next to them or across the room, because battle buddies, they said, can be found anywhere.

In addition to giving deployment survival tips to help keep marriages healthy, Crooks and Henderson talked about ways for spouses to keep themselves healthy both physically and emotionally.

"Fort Riley seems to have a lot of spouses that are new to the army and that makes for a different kind of audience,"



Deikaya Greer | POST

Startlett Henderson and Tara Crooks of the Army Wife Network hosted Spouse Field Exercise: Priceless Packages event at Riley's Conference Center. Crooks and Henderson hosted seminars for spouses May 20-21.

Henderson said, "We want to encourage them to use their resources, friends and neighbors and create their own support system."

Some relaxation tips given to spouses included taking a walk, laughing, watching a movie, having a girl's night, and getting a massage, manicure or pedicure.

Crooks and Henderson even talked about ways spouses could help their children deal with the stress of a deployment. Crooks suggested making daddy dolls or playing some of daddy's favorite games. Make sure to keep daddy in the loop, she said.

On top of getting great advice, an action plan and prizes, four spouses walked away with pre-made care packages. Each of the four packages had a different theme for different Soldiers – one for the Soldier who enjoys games, one for the movie buff, a comfort of home package and a package that contained colognes and razors to prepare the Soldier to transition

back to his Family life. "Coming to this event has given me a lot of knowledge," said Chardrika Dersorneaux, military spouse. "I've learned some very useful things, and I would love to participate in this again."

Participants were given golden tickets at their tables with all the services that are offered here at Fort Riley, care package ideas, ways to keep children involved in the deployment as well as programs nationwide to help Soldiers, Families and spouses.

"We know that the way we deliver the information to the spouses is unique and it gets their attention," Crooks said. "If some official Army person was delivering the same message it would be received differently. I'm glad we can come and reach these ladies and let them know that we understand what they are feeling and what they are going through."

For more information on the Army Wife Network, visit www.armywife.net.

EFMP help Families with special needs find resources on post

By William Bradner
FMWRCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

According to the National Health Information Center, part of U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, there were 41 National Health Observances last month alone – everything from Asthma and Allergy Awareness to Ultraviolet Awareness – and a total of more than 208 observances each year.

The sheer volume of information available to Family members with special needs can be overwhelming. The Army wants to make it easier for Soldiers and their Family members to navigate the complicated system of resources available to them.

"To do this, we've got to fix (Exceptional Family Member Program) so it works better, and we have to get the word out," said Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, commander of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command, at a recent conference.

EFMP is a DoD-mandated program to support Soldiers with Family members with special needs. In the Army, the program activity for EFMP is the Army's Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command. FMWRCS EFMP Managers are currently working with the Army Medical Command and sister-service counterparts to strengthen the

program.

"Rather than just creating another awareness campaign, we're staffing an action plan now that includes hundreds of steps – both baby steps and sweeping changes – that will help create a seamless flow of EFMP information and resources to Soldiers and Families with special needs," said Marcia Hagood, EFMP program manager.

"It's important to note that the program isn't broken, we're just making it better," Hagood continued.

The Army's EFMP currently has 52,573 Soldiers enrolled and 69,493 Family members registered. Program managers expect enrollments to increase as program education and awareness is raised. Hagood emphasized it's important for all Soldiers who have Family members with special medical or educational needs to enroll in EFMP. Not only is enrollment mandatory, enrollment ensures optimum use of permanent change of station funding by considering the Army's requirements, the Soldiers career and the special needs of Family members.

"It's not big brother wanting to know," Hagood said. "It's all about ensuring the Army allows the Soldier to focus on the needs of the military without unnecessary concerns for his (or) her exceptional Family member."

The program was estab-

lished in compliance with public laws, which collectively mandate that eligible preschool and school-age children with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate education. The Army expanded EFMP to include all authorized Family members with special needs – spouse, child, stepchild or adopted child.

If a Soldier is enrolled in EFMP, the Army reviews the special requirements of the Family member and confirms the availability of special medical or educational resources and required services at the next duty station prior to orders being released.

The Army Community Service EFMP managers also work with the Soldiers' Family members by providing information and referral and advocacy assistance, referral to support groups, medical providers, housing and respite care services. Once enrolled, the file must be updated by the Soldier every three years, or when there is a change in the family member's medical condition or educational needs.

"It can be challenging caring for a Family member with special needs and also having to worry about deployments and permanent changes of station every three years," Hagood said. "Imagine having to start from scratch seeking special medical care every time you relocate."

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