

COMMUNITY CORNER

Name changes, but Community Forum still place for voices to be heard

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

This quarter, we are changing the format of what used to be called the Senior Commander's Town Hall. The first meeting in this new format – the Community Forum – will be at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 15 at Riley's Conference Center.

One of the reasons we host the Community Forum is to provide spouses, Soldiers and

civilian employees with a direct line of communication to our senior leaders. If there are issues or questions you aren't sure where to find the answers to, bring them here.

Directorate heads, Picerne Military Housing and Irwin Army Community Hospital representatives



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join me at the forum to listen to your concerns and provide you with answers.

The main change from the town hall to the community forum format is the addition of an informational fair before and after the event. Much confusion or questions come simply because our Soldiers and Family members don't have the information they need. The expo will provide an opportunity for organizations on post to educate our population about what

they do and provide answers to questions in a one-on-one format versus talking about it with the group in attendance. The informational fair will be from 10 to 10:30 a.m. and again from 11:30 a.m. to noon.

As always, we'll have child care available during the community forum, but we need to have reservations or it will be canceled. To reserve child care for the forum, contact Beth Peterson at 785-239-4745 or elizabeth.m.peterson@us.army.

mil. Children without active Child, Youth and School Services' registrations may still receive child care with proof of current immunizations.

If you can't make it to the forum, log on to the Fort Riley page on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FortRiley. We'll create a topic under the discussion tab where we'll take your questions. Answers will be posted, and if you get Riley TV on the post's cable Channel 2, you can watch the event live.

Also, use the 24-hour phone line at 785-240-TOWN (8696) to leave your questions up until the community forum or call in live during the event to talk to leaders.

We want to hear from you. Please join us Dec. 15 to learn more about your community.

To comment on this column or suggest a topic for the Community Corner, send an e-mail to rile.post.newspaper@conus.army.mil.

FAMILY OUTREACH

Many suffer from 'holiday blues,' doctor offers tips to ease stress

By Erin Bishop
K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

Even though holidays are supposed to be filled with cheer and good spirits, many people will suffer from bouts of depression.

Thousands of Americans experience the "holiday blues" because of unrealistic expectations, financial and emotional pressure, having a family member stationed overseas and over commitments with family and friends. Jay Zimmerman, associate director of Ball State University's Counseling Center, offers some tips to help manage the holiday blues.

Be Realistic. The reality is many people's holidays include too much to do and too much to purchase and not enough money; and too much to eat and not enough willpower. Fighting against this reality will make a person more stressed and 'blue.' Be kind to yourself, seek support and be realistic in your commitments to yourself and others.

Create your own tradition. As families change, grow or deal with separation, their traditions need to change as well. When someone we love is far away, it can feel like a very sad holiday season. Think about ways to celebrate that may be different than the usual, but just as enjoyable. This can include creating your

own extended family. Invite new friends over to enjoy the holidays.

Help Others. This is the best antidote for self-pity and seasonal sadness. Find someone who is struggling more than you are and lend a helping hand. This can help us to connect with the real meaning of the holidays.

Take Care of Your Body. Eat healthy, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep and be merry. Instead of waiting for New Year's to make those healthy resolutions, start now. A little bit of movement will lift your spirits and can encourage you to reduce the amount of junk-food, sugar and alcohol you consume. Taking a walk and getting some sunlight has been found to help those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Be Financially Responsible. Overspending during the holidays will not only increase your stress now, but



Erin Bishop

also will leave you feeling anxious for months afterwards when you're struggling to pay the bills. Give up the holiday system of excessive gift-giving and practice simplicity and basic human kindness.

Breathe. Take a full breath, let it fill the bottom of your lungs and then release it slowly. Take time to practice deep breathing throughout the day. This can assist with lowering anxiety and stress levels. Next time you're stuck in a busy department store searching for that perfect gift or anxious about the arrival of the in-laws, try this a few times for a quick way to stabilize your mood.

Grieve. Honor the memory of family and friends that are no longer with us. The holidays can be the hardest for coping with a loss because we are constantly reminded of the missing presence of a person we loved. Find a way to remember them through the holidays. Many communities also offer Holiday Grief Support groups and this also may be beneficial in helping you adjust to the holiday season.

Forgive. Use this holiday season to forgive all sorts of people from your past, your work, your family and the ones you love. You'll feel emotionally lighter because grudges are heavy things to carry with us.

Avoid/reduce alcohol consumption. Alcohol is a depressant and can deepen existing emotional problems. It reduces inhibitions and can cause us to say or do things we might later regret. Learn to monitor and control this. Although a few stiff drinks

may make us feel like we're better able to handle holiday conflict and turmoil, it may make these things worse.

Change Expectations. Realize that no holiday or for that matter, no family is perfect. The pie may burn in the oven, guests may arrive late, your aunt may be in a negative or rude mood, but this is all part of the experience. Expect these things to happen and learn to laugh at yourself and the situation.

The holidays can be challenging for everyone and can

be as wonderful as they are stressful. Take a deep breath and do your best to get through them. The 'holiday blues' affect many people, and you do not have to have depression to experience it. If you have a period of more than two weeks where you have depressed moods, crying spells, sleep problems, feelings of guilt and thoughts of death and suicide, you probably have major depression and should seek medical care. You're moving beyond holiday blues.

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