

COMMUNITY CORNER

Holiday spirit alive at Fort Riley

By William Clark
GARRISON COMMANDER

Lt. Gen. Michael Ferriter, who assumed command of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command Nov. 17, shared in his monthly column, printed on page 5 of the post, his favorite examples of the caring spirit of our Soldiers, Families, retirees, civilians and community partners, not only during the holidays but year-round.

His story about the dedicated gate guard reminds me of the dedicated personnel at Fort Riley who keep this post running and exceed all of my expectations.

Whether it is the gate guard who stands at his post in the early, cold, morning hours, the cook who slaved over Thanksgiving meals for Soldiers at the dining facility, the military Family life consultant who helps our Soldiers and Families through issues or the physician who treats a wounded warrior – the Fort Riley community exemplifies a culture of caring and selfless service.

These qualities are part of our Army culture and should be noted all year, but I would like to note a few upcoming holiday activities that embody this spirit.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

Fort Riley will host the annual Wreaths Across America observance in conjunction with the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1281 at 11 a.m. Dec. 10 at the post cemetery.

In conjunction with observances across the U.S., about 1,000 wreaths will be placed at graves at the post cemetery.

Eight ceremonial wreaths to honor the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, Gold Star Families and POW/

MIA's also will be placed at the cemetery.

This is Fort Riley's fifth year of involvement in the event intended to remember those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation,



Col. Clark

to honor those who serve now and to educate the community on the steep price of liberty. This event – and the volunteers who take their time to make it happen – is a perfect example of the caring spirit of the Army, especially during the holidays.

TREES FOR TROOPS

Free holiday trees will be provided beginning Dec. 10 to Families of deployed Soldiers and to wounded warriors is another example of our caring spirit with the Trees for Troops program.

The program, which began in 2005, will have about 300 to 350 trees available for Fort Riley Families. Trees can be selected from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Building 9011, Outdoor Recreation Center, on Rifle Range Road.

Those planning to select a tree should bring a military or Department of Defense ID card and check in at the front desk area, before proceeding to the outdoor fenced area to select a tree. Hot chocolate and candy canes will be served.

Active duty, retirees and DoD cardholders may claim trees beginning Dec. 11, if supplies have not been exhausted.

OP SANTA CLAUS

This last example of how our Army and our Soldiers at Fort Riley care for one another

is one I have written about previously – Operation Santa Claus.

Op Santa, as we often refer to it, is an annual toy drive at Fort Riley that aims to provide Families who may not be able to give their children gifts this holiday season with something to put under the tree.

The concept is simple – Soldiers helping Soldiers; Families helping Families; Fort Riley helping its own.

Individual Soldiers wishing to receive toys for their Families may apply through their unit's first sergeant. Those wishing to make donations may submit new, unwrapped toys with a value ranging from \$10 to \$20.

To make a donation, visit the Santa's workshop between 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday. Extended hours are available upon request. Donations can be dropped off at one of about a dozen locations, including the 1st Inf. Div. headquarters, Building 580; Garrison headquarters, Building 500; each brigade's headquarters building; the Exchange; Armed Forces Bank on Custer Hill; Fire Station 1; and the Forsyth Fire Station. Drop-off boxes also will be located at Walmart stores in Junction City and Manhattan.

Donations may be sent to P.O. Box 2427, Fort Riley, KS 66642.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Johnson at 785-239-6944 or rife.santa@conus.army.mil.

Thank you for all you do to care for each other this holiday season and always!

If you would like to comment on this column or suggest a topic for Community Corner, send an email to rife.post.news.papere@conus.army.mil.

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON



Fort Riley Middle School Orchestra violin player Mollie VanAken, 12, entertains a crowd of students from Custer Hill Elementary School during a concert Nov. 30.

Mollie Miller
1st Inf. Div.



A Fort Riley Middle School student warms up before an orchestra concert Nov. 30 at Custer Hill Elementary. The students played several songs and answered questions about the orchestra.

Mollie Miller
1st Inf. Div.

Let us help you spread some Holiday cheer!

For only \$5.00, our Tooth Fairies will assist you in doing just that.

They will deliver a Holiday Gram to your wife, husband, child, boyfriend, girlfriend, coworker, boss, even an enemy!

The recipient will receive balloons and a small gift in a decorative holiday gift bag.

The Tooth Fairies will visit anywhere on Fort Riley, in Junction City, Grandview Plaza, Ogdan, and Manhattan on December 1st and 1st between the hours of 9:00am – 3:00pm each day.

To schedule your visit, please call the Tooth Fairy hotline at either: 785-240-5778 or 785-239-7440

*\$5 proceeds must be used for future purchases of the Fort Riley Dental Community.

Nominations now open for 2012 Military Child of the Year award

OPERATION HOMEFRONT

SAN ANTONIO – Operation Homefront recently announced the opening of the 2012 Military Child of the Year award nomination period.

The award will be given to an outstanding military child from each Service – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

The winners, who will each receive \$5,000, will be flown with a parent or guardian to Washington for special recognition ceremony April 5, 2012. Nominations are being accepted online until Jan. 15, 2012, at www.OperationHomefront.net/MCOY.

Ideal candidates for the Military Child of the Year award demonstrate resilience and strength of character and thrive in the face of the challenges of military life. They demonstrate leadership within their Families

and within their communities.

"The sons and daughters of America's service members learn what patriotism is at a very young age," said Jim Knotts, chief executive officer, Operation Homefront. "Children in military Families understand sacrifice and live with the concept of service. This is what the Military Child of the Year Award honors."

REQUIREMENTS FOR NOMINEES

- Must have valid military ID or currently be enrolled in DEERS

- Must be between the ages of 8 to 18

- Must be able to travel to Washington for the ceremony on April 5, 2012

Finalists must have a background check to confirm the information provided in the nomination and must provide references.

Recipients of the 2011

awards are profiled in the book

"Our Youngest Heroes."

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