

COMMUNITY CORNER

AER gives Soldiers, retirees opportunity to take care of Army's own

By Col. William Clark
GARRISON COMMANDER

Soldiers helping Soldiers, that is what the Army Emergency Relief Campaign is all about.

Starting March 1 to May 15, Fort Riley's Soldiers and Army retirees will be asked to help take care of their own by making a donation during the AER campaign.

The annual campaign is unique because those who give money are helping their fellow Soldiers, Family members and retirees right here in the Central Flint Hills Region.

The campaign kicks off at 10:30 a.m. Feb. 22 at the Fort Riley Network at Riley's Conference Center. The goal for 2013 is to raise \$200,000 for Soldiers. Last year, Fort Riley collected about \$170,000 for AER, which went to helping Soldiers and Families.

WHAT IS AER?

AER began in 1942, when the Secretary of War and Army chief of staff incorporated the private, nonprofit organization. Since then, emergency funds have been in place to help Soldiers at a moment's notice.

This could be funds in the form of an interest-free loan or grant to help someone who may need to pay rent, have repairs made on a privately owned vehicle or to buy an airline ticket for a funeral service in another state.

On a national basis in 2012, AER provided \$76.8 million dollars in assistance to more than 59,000 Soldiers and their Families worldwide.



Col. Clark

At Fort Riley, \$1.8 million of assistance was provided to 1,640 Soldiers or retirees and their Families.

Since its founding, AER has provided more than 1.3 billion dollars in assistance to Soldiers and their Families.

HOW CAN AER HELP ME?

AER is all about rapidly responding to our Soldiers' needs. Fort Riley commanders and first sergeants can use the Commanders Referral Program to approve AER loans up to \$1,000, in order to immediately resolve a Soldier's financial issues. After filling out a simple, one-page application, a Soldier would need to bring his or her most recent Leave and Earnings Statement to an appointment with an AER caseworker.

From the time you sit down with the caseworker, AER's goal is to have you out

the door with the money you need in 15 minutes or less.

If your spouse has been deployed, AER also can help through tough times. The spouse would need to bring a power of attorney, your military ID card and any substantiating documents to your AER case worker appointment.

AER can help Soldiers and Families make ends meet with emergency financial assistance in several areas, including the following: Non-receipt of pay, loss of funds, medical expenses, funeral expenses, emergency travel expenses, rent, food, utility bills, vehicle repair, permanent change of station travel, repair of heating and cooling equipment, repair or replacement of appliances, child car seats, cranial helmets, dependent dental care, basic furniture, and rental or replacement vehicles.

HOW CAN I HELP?

While anyone can make a donation to AER, Soldiers and retirees are the two groups who are contacted directly to support the program.

SOLDIERS

In the coming weeks, Soldiers will be approached either in formation or individually by their battalion unit project officer, who will provide a brochure and contribution form.

You can donate through payroll allotment, check or cash. When you're asked to give, please take a look at the Soldier standing next to you in formation. He or she could be going through a rough time, but you might not be aware of those troubles. You may think it will never happen to you, and I hope you're right.

RETIRES

Retirees should receive a

direct mail solicitation from national AER headquarters. Retirees can make a check or cash donation to the program.

Last year, retirees in the Fort Riley area gave more than \$22,000 to help Soldiers.

If you have questions about AER, check with your unit project officer. If you are a Family member, call 785-239-9435 and ask for an AER staff member.

When you contribute to AER, think of it as putting aside money for your battle buddy's rainy day. Emergencies never hit on a convenient schedule, but when they do, AER will be there to help.

If you would like to comment on this article, or suggest a topic for a future Community Corner, email usarmy.riley.incom.mdx, post-ncspaper@gmail.mil.

Community garden one way to enjoy outdoors, save money

By Calun Reece
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Getting outdoors into the garden is a great way to meet people, save on food costs, and soak up plenty of sunshine and happiness, said Susan Schoneweis, nutrition health agent, Kansas State University Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program at Fort Riley.

Picnic Military Housing residents can do just that by reserving a garden plot at the Fort Riley Community Victory Garden. The community garden is comprised of 72 plots with 24 plots reserved for organic gardening. Each plot is 20 by 20 feet. Reservations are ongoing.

The benefits of gardening are abundant, Schoneweis said. "I had a friend who had a really stressful job," Schoneweis said. "She said she had the best garden ever because she would come home and work in the yard and just work her frustrations out."

Gardening is good for physical and mental exercise, she added.

"The first year we had a major here (who) said it was great

because he can wear himself out in the garden so he could actually sleep," Schoneweis said. "So having just the physical and mental therapeutic advantages of gardening are well documented, so take advantage of it here."

Members of the community garden also have the opportunity to gather once a month to meet socially.

Usually gardeners will meet, have a potluck and have a work day together, Schoneweis said.

"It's a great way if ... Your Soldier is deployed, so you can get out of the house and see other adults," Schoneweis said.

Children enjoy time in the garden as well, Schoneweis added.

"Last year a couple of the spouses did a children's garden," Schoneweis said. "The kids had their own little four-square feet that they could plant stuff in."

Spending time gardening a Family also can be beneficial, Schoneweis said.

"We do encourage Families to garden together with kids," she said. "I encourage parents within your own Family's plot to let your children have their own row or their own little section so that they can grow what they want."

Sometimes the children and parents will find old bullet shells in the garden, Schoneweis added.

"I've got some on my desk that are from the 1940s," she said. "I think people are saying they're still finding things, so that's kind of fun."

"The kids love it, I think it's pretty cool," she added.

The community garden is located on River Road, off of Trooper Drive in the Forsyth Neighborhood.

Garden tools are provided for members of the community garden, if needed.

Housing residents interested in applying for a plot in the Fort Riley Community Victory Garden may visit www.rileypicnic.com. Click on the garden logo, and complete and submit the electronic form. Request forms also are available at each neighborhood office.

For more information about the community garden, call 785-717-2200 or email rileygardens@picnicemh.com.

Applications being accepted for weeklong Camp Corral

By Calun Reece
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Military children have a chance to experience a "week of a lifetime" this summer, said Mike Spohn, operations manager, Rock Springs 4-H Center. Camp Corral is currently accepting applications for a free, weeklong summer camp for military children. The camp is designed specifically for children with Family member(s) who have been wounded, disabled or fallen in action.

Camp Corral at the Rock Springs 4-H Center located in Junction City will take place July 14 to 19.

All military children ages 8 to 15 are welcome to apply, but priority will be given to those who have experienced the injury or death of a Family member in the armed forces. Parents will receive confirmation of acceptance within two weeks of applying. Registra-

tions outside of the priority group will be confirmed mid-May, as space allows.

"We want them to have that chance to step away and be a child and maybe forget about some of those things in life that they deal with on an everyday basis," Spohn said.

Campers will get to experience activities, including crafts, canoeing, horseback riding, archery, campfires and more.

"Each campsite varies a little bit in what they do, but they all have the traditional camp activities, (and) they all have some sort of a military appreciation day," Spohn said.

Camp Corral was started by Golden Corral in 2011 as a way to show support to military Families members. Camps can be found in 18 locations across the country.

"For a lot of those kids they give them the chance to be a kid," Spohn said.

Campers sometimes come

from broken Families or single-parent homes, he said.

"Last year, we had six or seven in attendance who had lost a parent overseas," he added.

About 240 children attended the camp at the Rock Springs location last year, and about 100 of those children were from Fort Riley.

Children came from 17 states and as far as Washington state to participate, Spohn said.

"It's really a great week to see the smiles on the kids and to hear the kids talk about just having fun and not worrying," he said. "If we can change just one of those kid's lives for that week, we've made a difference."

Slots are available for 240 children at the Rock Springs location. To apply for Camp Corral, visit www.campcorral.org.

For more information about the Rock Springs 4-H Center campsite, visit www.rocksprings.net or email mspohn@rocksprings.net.

K-State still providing nutrition education program at Fort Riley

By Calun Reece
1ST INF. DIV. POST

The Kansas State University Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program is still at work at Fort Riley providing nutrition education to military Families.

The FNP offers education about topics including food safety, food cost-cutting measures, Family gardening and proper nutrition.

"Adequate nutrition is essential to maintaining a healthy lifestyle," said Toni Jo Bryant, coordinator, FNP. "It is necessary for the Soldiers and Family members of Fort Riley to learn which foods are important to consume, correct portion sizes and how to properly

prepare those foods."

Currently food safety and nutrition education is taught in several of the first- and fourth-grade classes at the Fort Riley elementary schools.

First-graders have a program called "Book-in-a-Bag," said Susan Schoneweis, nutrition health agent, K-State Research and Extension FNP.

"Basically we read a book and teach a nutrition lesson related to the book and then they have a snack related to the nutrition lesson," Schoneweis said. "We've become very fa-

mous it's quite fun."

Fourth-graders receive a visit from "Professor Popcorn" for a nutrition lesson as well.

"Learning about nutrition, where food originates, and how to prepare it helps instill good eating habits that could lead to a healthier happier life," Bryant said. "Studies show that children can influence their parents to purchase more healthful foods such as fruits and vegetables."

FNP also provides preschool and youth cooking classes, and slow cooker and bread making

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Avengers 'Double Vision' comic book free to military at Exchange

AAFES PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fort Riley — Thor, Captain America, Hawkeye, Hulk and Black Widow are all making their way to military installations around the world, including the Fort Riley Exchange,

via 1 million free comic books published exclusively for the armed forces by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and Marvel Custom Solutions.

The new full-color comic, titled "Double Vision," opens five years in the future, with the Earth's mightiest heroes locked in a desperate battle with the high-tech terrorist group Hydra, who are finally

on the brink of conquering America itself. But when the rebellious Hawkeye begins asking the wrong questions, can the Avengers uncover a sinister conspiracy before it's too late?

"We are thrilled that the Exchange and Marvel continue to work together to provide these complimentary comics to military members here at Fort Riley," said General Manager Maryann Bishop, Fort Riley Exchange. "We could not have imagined when the first military-only comic came out in 2005 that, eight years later, the 14th installment in the series would be shipping out."

"Everyone at Marvel con-

siders the members of the armed forces our true heroes,

so we've assembled a top tier creative team to deliver 22 pages of action and adventure in the mighty Marvel manner,"

said Editor Bill Rosemann.

"Thanks to writer William Harms and artist Tom Grummett, you'll see Captain America sling his shield, Thor hurl his hammer ... and the Hulk eat hamburgers. Only the men and women of the U.S. military can get this collector's item issue, and best of all, it's free."

"Double Vision" is currently available exclusively at the Fort Riley Exchange.