

Post library offers many free activities

By Ashley Strehle
1ST INF. DIV. POST

When asked why Soldiers and Families should take the advantage of the Fort Riley Post Library, Leslie Mann, alternate project manager at the library, was stumped. She couldn't decide which reason to say first.

Mann noted the library's educational materials, wide variety of books, internet access and its free activities.

"We have story time. We have our books. We just have all kinds of stuff," Mann said.

The library is a free service for Soldiers and Families at Fort Riley.

It is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and from 12 to 5 p.m. Sunday. It is closed on Mondays and federal holidays.

The library's story times are held at 1:30 p.m. Saturdays and include crafts, stories and refreshments.

On Jan. 9, the library held a special story-time session. Kansas Parks and Wildlife came to discuss "Save the Eagles Day."

The next story time, on Jan. 16, will feature a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday bash.

In addition to its story times, the library offers free movie nights.

Movie nights are usually held once a month on a Saturday. They start at 6:30 p.m. Popcorn and drinks are provided.

The next movie night is Jan. 23 and will feature "Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs."

February's movie night, on Feb. 13, will feature "Alvin and the Chipmunks: A Chipmunk Valentine."

The library also hosts holiday parties such as its Valentine's Day-themed story time on Feb. 6.

In addition to its free activities and events, the library offers a variety of educational opportunities.

It carries the newest versions of exams for the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, Alternate Flight Aptitude Selection Test and General Educational Development test.

The newest versions of firefighters, nursing and postal exams are also available.

Any military reading required by the Combined Arms Research Library also is offered.

The library participates in an interlibrary loan program that allows individuals to borrow a book from any U.S. Army library in the world.

In keeping with its international theme, the library offers children's books written in Spanish and German.

Videos, CDs, cassettes, computer and video games are also available.

The video game collection includes titles for PlayStation, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, Nintendo Wii and Nintendo.

Individuals can borrow up to 20 items at a time from the library, but only three of those items can be videos, and only two can be video games.

Videos can be checked out for a week. Video games can be checked out for two weeks. And all other items can be checked out for 30 days.

The library is located at Building 5306 Hood Drive.

For more information on their services, call 785-239-5305 or visit www.rileymwr.com.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Army Family Covenant will be a budget priority

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER



Col. Kevin Brown

As with many in our nation, Army installations face reduced levels of funding this year and for the foreseeable future that will require us to prioritize some services we provide. Priority for funding will go to life, health and safety programs. No service that impacts the life, health and safety of our customers and employees will be overly decremented to a point that would unduly impact those services.

While priority services will not be curtailed, that doesn't mean conditions will remain the same. For example, while installation security measures will remain intact, customers and employees might have to stand in line a little longer for issuance of an ID card.

While we are exploring every opportunity to be more effective and efficient with our resources we remain committed to the Families and employees of Fort Riley. I encourage all of us to be understanding during this challenge and to do your part in helping us work through this together. Meeting this challenge will require us to think differently and work together to provide for our Soldiers and Families.

We've seen generations of Americans before us make sacrifices for the nation's greater good. Members of the "Greatest Generation" fought overseas as their Families worked double shifts and faced rations on food items and gasoline back home. Americans bonded together then, and I am confident that we at Fort Riley will come together now.

Last week, I shared with you Fort Riley's alternate work week test schedule. The 5-4-9 schedule will require employees to work five nine-hour days one week. The next week, employees work three nine-hour days and one eight-hour day. By Friday of the second week, employees will have worked their 80 hours and will get Friday off. This schedule aims to build resiliency and promote sustainability throughout our workforce. A secondary benefit is that we may achieve an energy usage reduction that could lead to funds available to spend on other important programs.

By implementing energy reduction efforts and better stewardship of resources, we can spend funds on much-needed efforts to deploy our Soldiers and take care of their Families – a priority for the Army and Fort Riley.

During this period of reduced budgets you can be certain that the Army will maintain the Army Family Covenant as a major priority. The Army has remained strong in its commitment to the Army Family Covenant.

Despite that point that would unduly impact those services, Army Family Covenant dollars have grown by a factor of four to more than \$4 million.

Fort Riley's leaders reaffirmed our commitment to Army Families when we resigned the Army Family Covenant July 31, 2009. And I'll share with you some of the deliverables provided:

- Four new child development center constructed in 12 months, providing 605 spaces that reduced the wait list to zero.

- Free respite care provided to 32 exceptional Families members last year.
- Support to more than 2,756 families members last year with job skills training through the Employment Readiness Program.

- Eleven new Army Community Service positions to support Family readiness programs.

- The ACS annex to provide free meeting space and child care for family readiness groups. The annex has two classrooms, four classroom/breakout rooms, one executive meeting room, a kitchen and a child care site.

- More than \$65,000 in savings to Families on registration fees for instructional and sports classes.

- More than \$1 million in child care fees subsidies to Fort Riley Families in 2009 to relieve cost of child care.

We've made great strides, and with the cooperation of our Soldiers, Families, civilian and contract employees, and our community partners, we will continue to build on this progress.

I want to create a sense of pride among our community that "We can do it!" Let's show other installations that we can team together and create enormous change in our behavior to better our Army, its Soldiers and Families.

If you would like to comment on this article or suggest a topic for the Community Corner, e-mail rile.post.newspaper@conus.army.mil.

ACS program helps Soldiers, Families handle relocating

By Ashley Strehle
1ST INF. DIV. POST

The Army Community Service Relocation Readiness Program helps Soldiers, Families and Department of Defense civilians adjust to new environments.

Individuals who are new to the area, for example, can learn about the Fort Riley community by reading a welcome packet, provided by RRP.

The packets explain what needs to be done prior to and upon arrival at the installation.

People can learn even more about the area by attending newcomer's orientations, also offered by RRP.

The orientations, called Discover Riley's Treasures, are offered to Soldiers, Families and DoD civilians.

They are held from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. the fourth Thursday of every month at ACS.

RRP also provides a lending service for incoming and outgoing Families.

The Lending Closet program is designed to help Soldiers and Families with household items until their household shipment arrives at their new location, said Theresa Gale, program coordinator with the RRP's Hearts Apart.

Basic kitchen equipment, high chairs, child car seats, play pens, ironing boards and other household items can be borrowed from the Lending Closet for up to 45 days.

Individuals need to bring their permanent change of station orders and their ID card to borrow items from the Lending Closet.

The Lending Closet is not for unit functions, private parties, yard sales or any other activities not related to a PCS move.

Individuals PCSing from Fort Riley must return all items to the Lending Closet before they will be able to clear ACS.

PCS briefings also are available to assist Soldiers, Families and DoD civilians who are preparing to leave for their next duty station.

PCS briefings offer information on next duty assignments, shipping of household goods, travel, passports and budgeting for a move.

Individuals do not need their orders to attend the briefings, but pre-registra-

tion is required.

People can attend the briefings as soon as they know their next installation.

For more long-distance travel, RRP offers a multicultural and citizenship program that provides information on immigration, naturalization, English as a Second Language classes, citizenship classes, translation classes and more.

Soldiers at Fort Riley who want to help those new to the area can become sponsors.

Sponsorship training is available online on the Fort Riley Web site. This training helps Soldiers become effective sponsors.

To become a sponsor, Soldiers need to let their training noncommissioned officer know they are interested. Then, if they have not had sponsorship training, they should contact RRP to enroll in a class.

RRP also offers a program to support the Families left behind due to a sponsor's mission requirements.

The program, called Hearts Apart, is for the Families of Soldiers who are deployed or are on an unaccompanied tour.

The goal of the program is to connect these Families with other Families in a similar situation.

"Hearts Apart provides a great opportunity for connecting with old and new friends in similar life situations and provides information and quality support to waiting Family members," Gale said.

The program provides these Families an opportunity to cope with the demands of a deployment or an unaccompanied tour.

Hearts Apart offers a fun-filled, relaxing atmosphere, Gale said.

The group meets the second Thursday of each month and holds events such as pool parties, bowling nights, costume parties and yoga classes.

Most Hearts Apart events are scheduled monthly, and registration is required to participate.

To become involved in Hearts Apart, call Gale at 785-239-9435.

For more information on the RRP, visit www.rileymwr.com, call ACS at 785-239-9435 or email rile.dnwracs@conus.army.mil.

FAMILY OUTREACH

Children's playtime can double as learning time

By Sara Mletzner
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During the season of gift giving, people may have gone overboard with all the shiny new toys, presents and new gadgets to delight our little ones. Did you know, however, while your child plays with all these new contraptions and games, they also are doing something that is actually crucial to their healthy development?

When children play, they continually learn and practice new skills and experience new challenges unforeseen in their daily encounters.

Play becomes learning time; it becomes a time for problem solving, investigating and planning.

With a variety of challenging materials, children begin to manipulate and discover for themselves how to twist and turn, how to build and explore, and how to create and interpret meaning from their past experiences. Through play, children begin to build character and strength as they respond to environmental stimulus, challenge their thinking skills and role playing characteristics encountered in their own world.

The power of play is multifaceted. It benefits healthy development at all ages. From infancy to toddlerhood and well into adolescence, play should be an important part of each and every day.

At each age, children are learning more about their world and are beginning to use this knowledge as they continue to create a stronger sense of self. Each level of play builds on each

other and as children grow their play begins to become more complex, more detailed and more goal oriented.

Play can help to increase vocabulary skills, define both small and large motor skills; it can help to build social skills as well as problem-solving skills, and it can be a catalyst for creative energies throughout the span of childhood.

Parents can help to facilitate quality play experiences through active participation.

Ask open-ended questions about your child's play. Resist the "good job" philosophy by genuinely pointing out your child's accomplishments – "You built that tower so tall!" or "You used lots of purple in your picture." This is a great way to help build vocabulary and can help children to foster a sense of pride in their work.

When looking to increase your child's toy collection, try and focus on the developmental goal playing with the toy encourages, not on the design or specific features of the toy itself. Look for toys that encourage imagination, and provide your child with toys that offer learning in different ways.

If your child seems to be interested in one specific toy – trains, for example – encourage exploration by offering complementary toys to supplement their play – blocks or cardboard boxes can be used as tunnels; books can be read about trains, and crayons can be used to draw pictures of trains.

Remember playtime is learning time. Respect playtime routines as much as other daily routines. It's just as important and essential for healthy development in your child.

Don't fall behind.
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