

COMMUNITY CORNER

Plan in place to accommodate larger student population at area schools

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

While kids at Fort Riley are thinking about their last weeks of summer vacation, leaders at Fort Riley and within the Central Flint Hills Region are looking ahead to the next school year and beyond.

With the growth that has occurred at Fort Riley and the 2012 Homecoming, where all five of our brigades, as well as the division headquarters will be home, our schools, which are already over capacity, will need to accommodate even more children.

The good news is help is on the way. During his visit two months ago, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates promised Fort Riley \$23 million dollars for school improvements. Currently, this money is in a bill making its way through

the House and Senate.

When it reaches Fort Riley and Unified School District 475, the \$23 million will alleviate overcrowding in our schools.

Improvements will include the construction of a new elementary school at Camp Forsyth and renovations to two other elementary schools and our middle school on post.

Our plans, however, don't stop there. Along with the \$23 million, we're seeking an additional \$113 million that would be used to construct new buildings for the Fort Riley Middle School and Fort Riley, Custer Hill and Morris Hill elementary schools; adding another new elementary school;



Col. Brown

demolishing the old buildings; and renovating Ware and Jefferson elementary schools.

Despite not having the latest and greatest in facilities on post, the staff and faculty at USD 475 manage to provide our students with top-notch education, as evidenced by the schools' many awards.

- Both district middle schools were named 2009 Gold Level Middle Schools by the Kansas Association of Middle School Administrators.

- USD 475 schools earned 98 Standard of Excellence Awards on the 2009 Kansas Assessments.

- Three USD 475 schools earned 2009 Governor's Achievement Awards

- Junction City High School was named a National Model School by the International Center for Leadership in Education.

- Six elementary schools

were named No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools.

- Four elementary schools were named National Distinguished Title 1 Schools.

This is only a handful of the numerous ways USD 475 has been recognized for excellence over the years. USD 475 has received the same types of recognition in the past, and will continue to provide world-class education for our students into the future.

While USD 475 teaches our children on post, in the outside communities, school districts in the Central Flint Hills Region provide education for our military students. USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden has the next largest military child population.

This year, both USD 383 and 475 received Department of Defense Education Activity Educational Partnership grants. The Manhattan-Ogden grant

of \$677,000 will fund "21st Century Mind Adventures," a program to raise student achievement levels and increase enrollment in science, engineering, technology and math. It will also provide extended tutoring for academically at-risk students.

Geary County received \$2.5 million, which will fund "Leading Reading," a program to reverse the decline in Kansas Reading Assessments scores among students at 14 Geary County elementary schools. The grant will also provide sustained professional development in reading for new and novice K-5 teachers.

For information on all of the districts in our area, visit the Kansas Department of Education K-12 Reports website at <http://swapp15386.kade.org/k12/k12.aspx>. Counties in the Central Flint Hills Region include Clay, Dickinson,

Geary, Morris, Pottawatomie, Riley, Saline and Wabaunsee.

School liaison officers are available at Fort Riley to help parents with school information. Our school liaison officers can assist parents in locating points of contact in the schools, and make referrals as appropriate. They help parents understand the policies and procedures of USD 475, and communicate educational opportunities and information.

To find out more about school liaison officers and how they can help you, visit www.rileywmr.com and click "CYSS" and then "School Liaison Services," or call them at 785-239-1648, 785-240-3260 or 785-240-3261.

If you would like to comment on this article or suggest a topic for Community Corner, e-mail rile_post_newspaper@comus.army.mil.

FAMILY OUTREACH

Families members deal with different stressors in different ways

By Nancy Peterson
K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Stress is part of life, but should not always be perceived as a negative, according to a team of Kansas State University Extension specialists.

"Stress generated by an approaching deadline or the need to get the grass mowed before it rains can be a motivating factor," said Elaine Johannes, a K-State Research and Extension youth development specialist.

What Johannes calls distress, which may be generated by an accident, job loss, illness, change or event, can, however, disrupt physical and emotional well-being.

Either can — and usually will — affect family life, said Johannes, who in sharing the discussion about stress in Families and how to manage it

with Charlotte Shoup Olsen, K-State Research and Extension Family systems specialist, shares the viewpoint that age and stage in life become important considerations in managing stress successfully.

If, for example, a partner, spouse or parent loses his or her job, the loss will extend beyond the paycheck and cause stress — and distress — in the Family, Olsen said.

As the news settles in, the pressure to replace the paycheck can be a motivating factor in the search for a new job, she said.

And, the distress due to the loss of wages (and financial security the lost wages provided) can generate physical and emotional responses that affect everyone in the Family, said Olsen, who noted that a couple's communication skills will be key factors in managing such situations, while also growing through the process.

"When faced with a stressful situation, it is best not to assume that you know how others are feeling," she said.

"Be respectful, and step up to share the responsibility, rather than trying to place blame."

"Let go of anger," said Olsen, who explained that anger can intensify the stress and damage relationships.

Make time to talk about the stressor, but, if tempers flare, take 20 minutes or more for a time out to calm down before resuming the conversation or making a date for discussion, she said.

In talking with each other, listen intently to what the other person has to say, without interrupting or rushing to judgment, Olsen said.

Choose body language — a nod, smile or continuing eye contact are examples — to let your spouse or partner know that he or she has your full attention.

In talking with each other and modeling stress management for the Family, Olsen encouraged parents to consider how much of the stress-producing issue they should share with their children.

A job loss, illness or relocation brings change and the need to accept — or acknowledge — change, said Olsen, who advises parents to "go with the flow in developing a plan and lead by example."

"Be honest and sincere; try not to magnify an issue, but don't discount it or try to cover it up, either," the Family systems specialist said.

And, while younger children may be shielded from some stress, teenagers who pick up on distress in the Family should not be expected to handle it as their parents or other adults do, Johannes said.

"A teenager is typically trying to find out who he or she is," she said. "They're becoming aware of the challenges of life, but usually will prefer to watch as parents and older siblings manage stress."

Saying that isn't the same as saying older children should avoid all stress, the youth development specialist said.

A teen's observations of how Family members cope with stress can be a helpful learning process, said Johannes, who reminded parents gender is a factor in communicating with teenagers.

Teenage boys are known to keep their feelings to themselves, said Johannes, who warned parents a teenage boy often will be more likely to share what's going on in his life while occupied with an activity such as playing basketball,

rather than when asked a direct question.

"Windshield time works, too," said Johannes, who explained that riding in a car together can sometimes generate conversation with teens, including opportunities for them to let parents know what's going on.

In contrast, teenage girls often are better able to express their feelings and concerns.

Either way, Johannes advised parents who are confronting Family distress to stick to the facts, but try not to overload children with too much information, and to listen to a teen, but try not to pry.

"Parenting a teenager and leading him, her — or them — through stress and inevitable

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