

COMMUNITY CORNER

Fort Riley Tax Center can provide users quick, easy tax preparation

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

With the end of the holiday season, a new season looms – tax season. Many people dread this time of year, but Soldiers, their dependents and retirees have the Fort Riley Tax Center to make filing state and federal returns a quick, easy and free task.

The Tax Center will open for business with a ribbon-cutting at 9 a.m. Jan. 18 in Building 7626 on the corner of Normandy and McClaghlin on Custer Hill.

If you are thinking of forgoing the Tax Center in favor of

quick cash from a refund-anticipation loan, don't. The Tax Center can electronically file your refund. Electronic filing and direct deposits drastically reduces the time it takes to get your refund. On average, filers see their refunds in less than a week.

Instant rebates offered by most commercial tax services are nothing more than loans with incredibly high interest rates. In fact, in 2006, the Department of Defense published



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a regulation protecting Soldiers from these expensive refund anticipation loans. In addition to increased disclosure requirements, fee-based tax preparation companies may not charge in excess of 36 percent interest for these loans.

If you prepare your taxes on your own, bring them into the Tax Center. One of the certified tax preparers will check over your state and federal returns to make sure you've got it correct. If the IRS questions your taxes, the Tax Center can provide help.

The Tax Center is just one more service provided at Fort Riley to help ease the burden on Soldiers and Family

members. Last year, the Fort Riley Tax Center saved its clients almost \$1.8 million in preparation fees. They prepared more than 13,000 federal and state returns and were able to obtain more than \$17 million in refunds.

W-2s for active-duty Soldiers will be available on myPay beginning Jan. 24. Call the Tax Center now at 785-239-1040 to set up an appointment. Hours are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are encouraged. Saturdays are for walk-in only.

Along with all of your W-2

forms, be sure to bring the following items – if applicable – with you when you head to the Tax Center:

- Social Security Card – required for everyone, including children
- Power of attorney
- All 1099-R Forms – Pension and Retirement
- All 1099-INT Forms – Interest Income Statement
- All 1099-DIV Forms – Dividend Income Statement
- Form 1098 – Mortgage Interest Statement
- Form 1098-E – Student Loan Interest Statement
- HUD-1 Forms for those who have purchased or sold a home in 2009

- Bank routing and account numbers
- Receipts for deductible expenses
- 2008 Tax return
- Form 8332 signed by custodial parent if a non-custodial parent is claiming a child exemption

The Tax Center will be open through April 20, but why wait? Gather your forms and make your appointment today. Appointments can be made by calling 785-239-1040.

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.

Army Family Team Building celebrates 16th birthday

By Katherine Rosario
1ST INF. DIV. POST

The Army Family Team Building program celebrated its 16th birthday Jan. 7 at Barlow Theater, and members of the program highlighted the advancements in the program since its first session in 1994.

The concept for AFTB, a program that teaches Army Family members about military life, originated in 1992 when senior leaders and spouses saw a need to educate Family members following the Gulf War, said Julie Zwiebel, employment readiness coordinator, Army Community Service.

Spouses often didn't know the ranks of Soldiers, where to find information on post or proper etiquette during a military ball, she said.

Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, former chief of staff, and Richard A. Kidd, former sergeant major of the Army, signed the AFTB program policy letter Dec. 6, 1994, making AFTB an official Army program.

Since then, the program has grown to include the incorpo-

ration of the Enlisted and Officer Basic Training courses.

"AFTB significantly contributes to the growth of high-performing Soldiers and self-reliant Families, but it also has set a high standard of success for an all-volunteer, professional program," Zwiebel said.

AFTB is offered to Family members at Fort Riley in three levels of progressive detail.

The first level, Army 101, is for new Family members who don't know much about Army life.

The course teaches the rank structure, how to read a spouse's leave and earning statement, and how a Family readiness group can help in a time of need, said Becky Willis, Army Volunteer Corps coordinator.

"Levels 2 and 3 teach spouses how to become leaders in their community and spread their new knowledge to other spouses," Willis said.

All classes are from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Resiliency Learning Center, Building 7285, next to ACS on Custer Hill.



AFTB program members pictured with Brig. Gen. David Petersen, 1st Inf. Div. deputy commanding general – rear, center back, and Col. Kevin Brown, garrison commander, right, celebrate the 16th birthday of the program Jan. 7 at Barlow Theater, where the volunteer teachers highlighted the advancements in the program since its first session in 1994.

Katherine Rosario
POST

Participants must pre-register for classes by calling ACS at least 24 hours in advance. Child care is provided.

Level 1 classes will run Jan. 11 to 12, Feb. 26 and March 5. Level 2 classes will run from Feb. 8 to 10, and Level 3 from March 15 to 17.

"We try to impress upon the importance of what to do and why," Willis said. "We help them to prepare to take

on more responsibilities and leadership roles and to be able to take on whatever the Army throws at them."

If a spouse is left at Fort Riley while their Soldier is deployed, Willis said it is important for them to know where to go to get help and information.

The program also is a good way for spouses new to the area to meet other spouses and create an information network,

Willis said.

"They get the opportunity to meet other spouses who are new and have a friend to reach out to," she said.

For those who need a class to work around their busy schedules, an online version is offered at www.mymymone.com.

Any classes previously taken at another post can be transferred from post to post, and

the course can be picked up where the person left off, Willis said.

Classes do not have to be taken in order and credit will still be given regardless of what level a person starts out on.

For those spouses who do not speak English, classes are available in German, Korean and Spanish.

For more information call Zwiebel at 785-239-9435.

WINTER WONDERLAND



Katherine Rosario | POST

A version of what Fort Riley looks like at Christmas is displayed Jan. 6 at School Age Soldiers. The village, which was made by children after school, included a check-in gate, church and homes made from candy.

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go back on patrol six hours later, while he had psychologists walking into his room around the clock checking up on him.

"The earlier and more often you talk about a traumatic experience, the faster you will recover from it, or so I thought," he said.

Mantz said too many people and Soldiers are led to believe PTSD is caused simply by seeing blood, guts and gore on the battlefield.

"I'm here to tell you that it has very little, if anything, to do with that. I believe that as a culture in the United States, we have grossly oversimplified post-traumatic stress," he said. The aspects of PTSD that will bring a Soldier to his or her knees and kill him or her, Mantz said, are the emotional burdens and injuries Soldiers have to live with for the rest of their lives after combat.

When these emotions come to fruition, he said, they tend to do so in the form of a catastrophic breakdown, where the Soldier finds himself standing in the corner of his room with a gun to his head and suddenly

doesn't have a clue who he is anymore.

"That moment in time, in the deepest throes of their depression, is the decisive point of post-traumatic stress. If we as a military, as a community, as friends of that Soldier, can enhance that Soldier's resilience enough so that in the deepest throes of his depression, he picks up a phone instead of pulls the trigger, we've taken our first step toward a successful recovery," he said.

At the higher levels of the Army – the senior levels of the Army, he said, sweeping changes have been made over the past few years.

In 2008, the Army partnered with the National Institute of Mental Health to conduct a five-year study on suicide and evaluate resilience across the force.

Since 2007, the Army increased its number of behavioral health specialists by 71 percent, with more planned.

"We've also implemented a Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program which was designed to enhance the

silence of our Soldiers before they experience emotional distress and allow them to bounce back from adversity more effectively," he said.

The biggest struggle, however, Mantz said, is dealing with the lower-level leadership and Family involvement.

"While you may not be the experts, you often will be the first line of defense to pick up on those indicators and help that Soldier move to the next level of care," he said.

Leadership shouldn't stop after a Soldier gets out of the military, Mantz said.

"It's not just about helping us; it's about helping yourselves as well. Every Soldier that comes back from a deployment has a least 20 people that he directly affects, who are directly affected by the demeanor of that Soldier," he said.

The first step is to know what resources are available.

"We're doing nothing short of creating a cultural shift in the United States," he said.

For more information about Fort Riley, visit www.riley.army.mil