

## COMMUNITY CORNER

# Volunteers make a difference, significant impact in community

By Col. Kevin Brown  
GARRISON COMMANDER

This past week, Fort Riley and the 1st Infantry Division celebrated their volunteers as a part of National Volunteer Week.

Volunteers are an essential part of military life and can be found across the installation and helping out in their off-post communities, as well.

Over the past year, Fort Riley and the 1st Infantry Division resigned Army Community Covenants with the eight counties in the Central Flint Hills Region and the state of Kansas. While the covenant signings formalized our partnerships and commu-

nity outreach efforts, it is the interaction between our Soldiers, Families and community members which truly showcase how well we work together and what we can accomplish when we do.

We rely heavily on our community partners to help us perform our missions every day. And each day, our friends in the local region step up and work with us, side-by-side, as we go about caring for our Families and preparing our Soldiers for war. Their impact on us is significant.



Col. Brown

Initiatives such as the Adopt-A-Community and Adopt-A-School programs help keep our Soldiers in touch with the communities surrounding Fort Riley. Adopt-a-Community and Adopt-A-School programs allow Soldiers to get out into the communities to volunteer, but what about community members who want to volunteer on post?

Family Readiness Groups are a great place to volunteer. And while you're helping out, you'll be keeping up with the latest information on your spouse's unit. Sharing information and helping to guide newer spouses is a rewarding experience. Contact your FRG to find out what opportunities are available.

USO Fort Riley is always looking for volunteers to supplement its efforts.

The USO center on Custer Hill is open 365 days a year and is staffed by volunteers. Volunteers also help run all of USO Fort Riley's programs, including its No Dough Dinners.

To volunteer, stop by the center, or call 785-240-5328. The USO also supports Soldiers and their Families by sponsoring events like the recent Month of the Military Child concert at Marshall Army Airfield.

Another non-profit organization, Cause-Helping Americas Military Wounded, is looking for volunteers to staff its digital entertainment

library, which provides free movies to wounded warriors. Interested volunteers can e-mail [fortrileycause@gmail.com](mailto:fortrileycause@gmail.com) for more information.

Volunteer opportunities abound on and off post, which touch the lives of everyone in our communities. Where do you want to make a difference?

We all work together to create strong communities and support each other's efforts. If you volunteer on post, I encourage you to report your hours to the Army Volunteer Program coordinator at Army Community Service.

Volunteer reports are sent through command channels to the Department of the Army. Hours are calculated annually and bring dollars back to

the Fort Riley community to help fund existing programs and implement new ones. The more hours our volunteers report, the more money that comes back to support our Families.

Turning in volunteer hours also gives us the opportunity to thank those who are working to keep our community strong. If you are interested in volunteering here at Fort Riley, stop by ACS or call Becky at 785-239-9435. She will be glad to help you find a volunteer position that fits your needs.

If you would like to comment on this article or suggest a topic for Community Corner, e-mail [rlc.post.newspaper@cms.army.mil](mailto:rlc.post.newspaper@cms.army.mil).

## Red Cross reservist, husband deploy at same time to Iraq

By Katherine Rosario  
1ST INF. DIV. POST

An American Red Cross reservist at Fort Riley recently returned from a five-month deployment to Iraq, where she helped give Soldiers a little piece of home through movie nights, holiday cards and homemade cookies.

Sherill Rawlinson, who is part of the Red Cross mobile staff, completed her second deployment March 21 and returned to Fort Riley where her husband is stationed.

However, her husband, Capt. John Rawlinson, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, is not at home. He is still in Iraq completing his deployment until later this year.

Both were stationed in the same location in Baghdad, and although they each had separate missions, they were able to see each other.

"It was awesome that we got to see each other," Rawlinson said, adding she would often try to help her husband's unit with events.

The Red Cross is located throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, where reservists like Rawlinson volunteer to deploy for four to five months to assist three- to four-person teams.

The 1st Infantry Division requested their assistance in Iraq because the Red Cross also helped the division out during

the Vietnam War, she said.

"It was kind of neat to be asked by the division to come over and help because they were huge for us in Vietnam," Rawlinson said.

The Red Cross mobile staff's main priority is to serve as an emergency communications point between Soldiers and their Families.

"Anyone can start the message, even a Soldier, and that's what a lot of people forget," she said. "We are here to be the physical presence, to answer questions and send information to the Soldiers' commanders."

The Red Cross mobile reservists have been in place since Easter 2001, but only recently have they had the chance to serve the Soldiers in a more social setting, Rawlinson said.

"Because there are only three to four Red Cross reservists covering each area, they are often limited on what they can do," she said.

During the holidays, Rawlinson said she and her group handed out cards at the dining facilities and had a gingerbread house contest.

Before Valentine's Day, they set up a photo booth for Soldiers to take pictures of themselves and write a card home.

"Because they are working so hard, sometimes they forget the holidays, and though they have the capability to call or see their loved ones on video chat, there is nothing like a

handmade card from your Soldier," she said.

Rawlinson also assisted in the fun runs Soldiers hosted on the bases by handing out water.

"Now they make sure to request the Red Cross to hand out water," she said.

Later in her deployment, Rawlinson said her group started hosting movie nights for Soldiers to relax after a day's work.

"A lot of units were starting to do it individually on the T-wall, so we decided to give them the chance to come by the building and watch a movie," she said.

The units also gave back to the Red Cross by building a boardwalk leading to its front door, complete with a deck and fire pit, Rawlinson said.

Although she said she hopes to be able to deploy again, for now, Rawlinson said she is settling back into life in the U.S. and waiting for her husband to come home.

"I never knew I'd work for the Red Cross, but I knew I wanted to volunteer," Rawlinson said, adding she is a fourth generation Red Cross volunteer in her Family.

The Fort Riley Red Cross is located in Grimes Hall, Building 510 Huebner Road on Main Post.

For more information, call 785-239-1887.

## Local teens form support group for military students at JCHS

By Katherine Rosario  
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Packing, moving, unpacking and settling seem to be common events in military life that Soldiers and Families perform. Once the move is complete, children are enrolled in a new school, where they have to make new friends, enroll in new after-school activities, and once again, find their niche.

For military teens at Junction City High School, a program called Brat Chat helps students connect to the military, meet new people and give them an outlet to speak confidentially about their feelings.

The group currently has about 10 full-time members, with others who attend the group as needed, said Carrie Groat, junior, JCHS.

Groat said she originally heard about the group during morning announcements last year and decided to attend a meeting.

"I hadn't been involved in anything like it since I moved to Kansas halfway through my freshman year, and I like support groups because I haven't been part of the military my whole life, so I wanted to see what other people were experiencing," she said.

The group talks about how the teens are handling everyday life and how they feel at home and with their Family.

Although she has not been involved in the military life-

style for long, Groat said she understands when teens have to move. She has moved 17 times.

"It can hurt to lose friends because of a move and sometimes you can feel alone, but because there are others just like them, children are enrolled in a new school, where they have to make new friends, enroll in new after-school activities, and once again, find their niche."

In the future, Groat said she hopes to make the group an official school club so it can receive funding and members can participate in field trips after school.

A teen must have at least one parent involved in the military and parent permission to join the group.

"We are a very eventful and happy and loving group, and we don't judge people," Groat said.

Alex Kuntz, junior, JCHS, started attending meetings because he said it provided a good outlet for military teens to talk to each other.

"We all are friends and can support each other," Kuntz said. "Everyone has a common bond and most of them have been through deployments, which is a big topic."

More than half the group has a parent deployed or preparing to deploy.

Kuntz' father, Staff Sgt. Troy Kuntz, 84th Explosive Ordnance Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, is about to deploy.

"This group will help me

through his deployment," he said.

When military teens come to the high school, Kuntz said he encourages them to join the group.

"When teens move into a new area, they might not have as many friends, and this group helps you establish friends and people to connect to," Kuntz said.

Jessica McKnight, a sophomore and new student at JCHS, heard about the group and decided to join to see if it could help her.

Through the group, McKnight said she has earned community service hours and has been able to connect with teens her age who have a parent in the military.

"My dad was overseas in South Korea, and during R&R when he came home, it was different, and I had a hard time, but I was able to turn to the group and talk to them about it and get advice, and things have gotten better," she said.

McKnight said she recruits people by talking to them in the hallways about the group and letting them know there is a support group for them to talk about the difficulties of deployments and give advice to other teens.

"When my dad has to go to war again, having the group will help, too," she said.

For more information about Brat Chat, call Junction City High School at 785-717-4200.



For information about religious services at Fort Riley or to talk to a chaplain, call 239-3359 or visit [www.riley.army.mil](http://www.riley.army.mil) and click on "Fort Riley Services" under the Services link.