

COMMUNITY CORNER

Use 'Ask, Care, Escort' method to help prevent suicides, commander says

By Col. William Clark
GARRISON COMMANDER

Our Soldiers, Family members and civilian employees are our most valuable resources.

Our Soldiers carry out the Army's mission. Their Families support them while they're at home and deployed. Civilian employees provide services and support to our Soldiers and their Families. One, without the others, just doesn't make a complete team.

When we lose a member of our team to suicide, everyone feels it. I want everyone on this post to know suicide is not the answer. I want them to know how they can get help, and that we do care.

September is Suicide Prevention Month and, although the message included below and that of Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch on page 1 is important year-round, this is just another

time throughout the year we can focus our efforts on getting the word out about suicide prevention.

I'd like to say, first and foremost, if you are feeling distressed or hopeless, thinking about death or wanting to die, or, if you are concerned about someone who may be suicidal, please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline immediately at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

For years now, our team has been working day and night to keep up with a high operational tempo. Numerous deployments and the stress of being away from Family can seem insurmountable at times.

If this has become the case for you, don't be afraid to seek help. All units at Fort Riley



Col. Clark

have trained gatekeepers. If stress is overwhelming you and you've thought about suicide, seek out your unit gatekeeper. Chaplains, in units and for the installation, can provide help. And don't forget about your friends. They will be there for you.

If you are a friend, co-worker or leader who someone reaches out to, know what to do. Be aware, however, that not everyone reaches out. Pay attention to those around you – your co-workers, fellow Soldiers, the other spouses in your Family readiness group. Take what they say and their actions seriously.

If someone comes to you for help, remember the ACE acronym: Ask your buddy – Have the courage to ask the question directly; "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

Care for your buddy – Remove means which could

be used for self-injury; calmly control the situation; and actively listen to produce relief.

Escort your buddy – Never leave your buddy alone; escort them to the chain of command, a chaplain, a behavioral health professional or a primary care provider.

Besides having the resources to help individuals get the help they need when they need it, Fort Riley also has programs in place to build resiliency and teach our team members how to deal with the ongoing stresses of Army life.

The Army's first Resilient Spouse Academy started in last August at Fort Riley and has been going strong for more than a year now. Through that program, spouses are being trained as additional sensors to be prepared to help and spot anyone who may be having suicidal thoughts.

The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program focuses on

strengthening our Soldiers', Family members' and civilian employees' abilities to maintain healthy physical, mental, spiritual, Family and social lives.

Family Life Ministries, our chapel programs and Strong Bonds program help Soldiers and Family members stay in touch with their spiritual sides. Chaplains also provide counseling to help strengthen marriages and provide single Soldiers with the skills they need to develop healthy relationships.

Military life consultants on post can meet with Soldiers upon their redeployment to talk about stresses or worries they may have. Soldiers may meet with or without their spouses, and the off-the-record appointments allow Soldiers to find the resources they may need.

Additionally, Army Community Services has programs designed to help with employment readiness, financial

readiness, deployment and mobilization, parenting and much more. Information about these programs can be found by calling 785-239-9435.

One of the things many of us forget to do during our hectic work days is to schedule time to breathe, enjoy our Family and friends or just do something we enjoy. Make time for yourself.

Keep an eye on the newspaper for upcoming events you can get involved in, or visit www.rileymwr.com.

We all deal with emotions differently. Building our resilience reserves can give us the strength we need to realize a situation is something we can deal with, and if we need help, it's okay to ask.

If you would like to comment on this article, or suggest a topic for a future Community Corner, email rile.past.necupaper@comus.army.mil.

Youth nondenominational activities available on post

By Melony Gabbert
1ST INF. DIV. POST

A nondenominational religious activity for middle and high school students takes place nearly every night of the week at Fort Riley.

On Tuesdays, Junction City High School students may walk or drive one block from the school to the First Southern Baptist Church for a nondenominational Bible Lunch Tuesday, or BLL, said Donald Ericson, protestant director of religious education, U.S. Army Garrison Religious Support Office.

"We generally feed 100 to 160 students each week. There is a short devotional. Students get a chance to hang out with

fellow Christian classmates," Ericson said.

Tuesdays also provide students with an opportunity to practice music for Wednesday's Club Beyond Momentum. Music rehearsals are from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays at Normandy Chapel, Building 7865 on Custer Hill.

Wednesday offers Club Beyond Momentum for middle and high school students, generally numbering between 40 and 60, Ericson said.

There are games, music, a lesson, a "vortex" or small group discussion and a larger group meeting. Club Beyond takes place from 6 to 7:30 at Normandy Chapel as well.

On Thursdays, a Bible study group for girls and one

for boys takes place. Both are for middle and high school students. The girl's Bible study this year focuses on the Bible book "It Is Me: How Do I Embrace Who I Was Made to Be?" The boy's Bible study focuses on "Do Hard Things." Both groups meet in the basement of the Main Post Chapel, 205 Custer Avenue.

On Sundays, there is "less structured, little more laid back" activity, Ericson said. Remix youth group offers "games, fellowship, in an atmosphere where participants are able to bring up what they want to talk about," Ericson said.

Often, the message of Club Beyond on Wednesday is discussed further, according to Ericson.

In each of these youth groups activities, 15 core values are central, Ericson said. Students have to memorize these values and the scriptures related to those values, he said.

These values also are stressed in the once monthly mentoring program for males, Spiritual Rangers. This program is available for middle and high school students, but fathers and other men are "always, always" encouraged to come, Ericson said. The activity can build stronger familial relationships, but also expose youth to other Christian men when fathers are deployed, he added.

The program also is designed to strengthen young men's identities "as men and

particularly as Christian men," Ericson said.

The next events for the Spiritual Rangers include a Sept. 25 Leadership Reaction and Obstacle Course, which is, according to Ericson, the same Custer Hill course the Soldiers run through. On Oct. 22, a Kansas City Men of the Cross outing will take place.

For more information, www.menatthecross.org/blog/2011/03/04/kansas-city-mo.

Nov. 20 brings Rifle Qualifications, and Dec. 18 brings Pistol Qualifications. During both events, participants may earn the same badges given to Soldiers to wear on their Spiritual Ranger T-shirts or hats, Ericson said. There will be dif-

ferent rewards for different levels of proficiency, designated by Ericson.

In addition to weekly religious service activities, and the monthly Spiritual Ranger outings, two retreats are planned for September – one for the boys and one for the girls. Both will take place on "500-plus beautiful acres," said Ericson, of Living Water Ranch, located 16 miles north of Manhattan on Turtle Creek Reservoir.

The focus of this off-site retreat is "following God," Ericson said.

The retreat for the boys is Sept. 9 and 10. For the girls, the date is Sept. 16 and 17.

For information on any of these activities, contact Ericson at 785-239-0979.

12 join HASFR during annual ice cream social, membership drive

By Shandi Dix
1ST INF. DIV. POST

More than 10 historians joined the Historical and Archeological Society of Fort Riley during the group's annual membership drive and ice cream social Aug. 29 at the Custer House.

"HASFR holds an annual ice cream social every August to kickoff the many events we coordinate every fall (including Fall Apple Day Festival) in September, Ghost Tours in October and, this year, Tour of Homes in December," said Carrie Ann Mathews, publicity chair, HASFR. "It is a gathering of old and new members at one of Fort Riley's jewels – the Custer House."

During the membership drive, HASFR acquired three lifetime members and nine yearly members.

"Many new members that had previously signed up at the Super Sign-Up Event in August also dropped in for an evening of pie, ice cream and tours of the Custer House," Mathews said.

HASFR's mission is to promote and preserve the history of Fort Riley.



COURTESY PHOTO

Members of HASFR gather for the annual membership drive and ice cream social Aug. 29 at Custer House.

"We not only focus on Fort Riley's past, but our future. Yearly, we distribute over \$10,000 back to the community to support local non-profit organizations and school history programs," Mathews said.

HASFR is open to the public, and those wishing to join HASFR can do so all year long, Mathews said.

Yearly memberships are good for 12 months from date of membership form and are \$5. Lifetime memberships are \$25.

"Members enjoy discounted Custer House rent-

Government Vacation Rewards now accepts Military Star Card

IMCOM

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. – Government Vacation Rewards, a travel benefits program available through the Army's Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation program, announced the Military Star Card will now be accepted when servicemen and servicewomen purchase airline tickets online. Government Vacation Rewards is the only online travel retailer to accept the Military Star Card for all travel-related products and

services.

"This is going to be a tremendous benefit to military personnel. Airline tickets can be expensive, especially when traveling with the whole Family, and being able to pay using their Military Star Card is a great benefit," said Col. R. John Cully, vice president of government and military sales for Government Vacation Rewards.

Government Vacation Rewards provides military members exclusive savings on cruises, hotels, airfare and re-

sort stays. Military Star Card holders have complimentary access to all travel destinations and discounts through this program. Additional benefits of Government Vacation Rewards include no booking fees, a best-price guarantee, military rates and loyalty programs.

For more information and to book travel or vacation packages, visit www.MWRExchangeVacations.com, or www.GovVacationRewards.com/military.

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