

COMMUNITY CORNER

Upcoming Celebrating Couples campaign aims to strengthen relationships

By Col. William Clark
GARRISON COMMANDER

The month of February is often associated with Valentine's Day – a day associated with love and relationships. Fort Riley will celebrate relationships in a different way in February with the Celebrating Couples campaign. This year's theme for the campaign is, "Communication Plus Commitment Equals Happy Couples."

The campaign aims to help strengthen relationships among military couples, and the staff at Army Community Service's Family Advocacy Program will host several fun classes and activities to help

accomplish this goal. Patricia Love, an expert in the field of marital relationships will be on post Feb. 7 at Riley's Conference Center to provide two sessions of marital training.

Love, an author and speaker, will present "Now That You Are Back, Let's get Us Back: Using Gender Science to Help Couples Deepen Their Connection," from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and "How to Get Your Groove Back: Restoring Passion and Intimacy in your



Col. Clark

Relationship," from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Later in the same week, four marriage seminars presented by Kansas State University professors and K-State Research and Extension staff will take place. These seminars are designed to improve communication skills and celebrate relationships.

Topics of discussion include "Blended Families," which will be taught by David Thompson from 9 a.m. to noon Feb. 9; "Fidelity and Marriage," which will be taught by Jared Anderson from 1 to 4:30 p.m. Feb. 9; "Finances and Marriage," which will be taught by Laura Weiss-Cook from 9 a.m. to

noon Feb. 10; and "Trauma and Marriage," which will be taught by Briana Goff from 1 to 4:30 p.m. Feb. 10.

A final opportunity during "Celebrating Couples" month is the Premarital Relationship Enrichment Program, or PREP, which will be taught by Jerry Mulryan, FAP specialist, from 1 to 2 p.m. Feb. 16 and 23. The program, which is similar to the Army's "Strong Bonds" program, is a two-class series focusing on improving communication skills.

For more information on any of the Celebrating Couples events, contact ACS at 785-239-9435 or email rle.dmwrcs@conus.army.mil.

I encourage all of our couples

to take advantage of these opportunities. Even if your relationship is on solid ground, it never hurts to get new tools to keep it that way. If you're having issues, make the commitment to work on your relationship.

Our Army keeps our Soldiers moving, and our Families have the important job of supporting them at home.

Building a strong base for your relationship will help couples build resiliency and weather the ups and downs of marriage and the added challenges that being married in the Army throws our way.

And, if you are looking for more traditional Valentine's Day events, here are just a few

events happening around post:

- Sweetheart Dinner and Dance – 6 to 10 p.m., Feb. 10 and 11, Riley's Conference Center

- Couples Zumba – 9 to 10 a.m., Feb. 11, King Field House

- Fort Riley Library Valentine's Day Party – 1 to 3 p.m., Feb. 11

- Valentine's Day Family Bowling and Wacky Tournament – 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Feb. 13, Custer Hill Bowling Center.

To comment on this article or suggest a topic for the Community Corner, send an email to rle.post.newspaper@conus.army.mil.

DoD launches website for military children

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JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. – The Department of Defense launched a new website Jan. 18 for children experiencing the challenges of military deployments.

The interactive website, www.MilitaryKidsConnect.org, was created by psychologists at DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology. It helps children of deployed parents cope with the stress, changing responsibilities and concern for the safety of their parents, officials said.

The center, known as T2, developed the website with informational videos, educational tools and games and activities for three age groups: 6 to 8, 9 to 12 and 13 to 17. The site features monitored online social network forums for the groups to safely share their experiences with deployments.

MilitaryKidsConnect.org is the first DoD website to connect children in the widely separated active, Reserve and National Guard military communities, officials said.

"Since 2001, an estimated 2 million children have said

goodbye to a parent headed to deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, other places around the globe and on ships at sea," said Kelly Blasko, T2 psychologist. "Military children are deeply affected by the separation of their parent's deployment. We've seen that in their hearts, kids deploy, too."

The website has features that will help children, parents and educators navigate the wide range of practical and emotional challenges military Families must live with throughout the deployment cycle, Blasko said.

"While military children are very adaptable, given the constant changes and stressful nature of military life, deployment puts a unique stress on Family relationships at home, which can also affect the deployed service member," she said. "The DoD now has a website to help the youngest members of the military community."

The National Center for Telehealth and Technology serves as the primary DoD office for cutting-edge approaches in applying technology to psychological health.

Political expert discusses Legislative redistricting

K-STATE MEDIA RELATIONS

MANHATTAN – Redistricting has begun in Kansas with the opening of the state's 2012 legislative session. The decennial process has often proven contentious, and it resulted in the longest legislative session in Kansas history in 2002. A variety of outcomes could come from the latest efforts at redistricting, especially with significant population adjustments statewide.

A Kansas State University professor of political science with expertise in Kansas politics can answer questions about the redistricting process and how the state's congressional and legislative districts are likely to be affected.

Joseph Aistrup is frequently cited by media sources for his expertise in Kansas politics. He is one of five editorial writers for "Insight Kansas," a syndicate that analyzes Kansas politics and government. In 2010, Aistrup and colleague H. Edward Plentje published "Kansas Politics and Government: The Clash of Political Cultures" by the University of Nebraska Press. His work has been published in a number

of political science journals, including Social Science Quarterly, American Review of Politics and Kansas Government Journal.

Aistrup can be reached at 785-532-6900 or jaistrup@k-state.edu.



Sgt. Summer Woode | 1ST HBCT

Volunteers – both 1st HBCT Soldiers and Family members – were recognized at the brigade's quarterly volunteer recognition ceremony Jan. 19 at Riley's Conference Center. The volunteers were recognized and presented awards for their time spent working with their units and the surrounding communities in the Central Flint Hills Region.

'Devil' Brigade recognizes volunteers

By Sgt. Summer Woode
1ST HBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team had its quarterly volunteer recognition ceremony Jan. 19 at Riley's Conference Center.

The ceremony was a combination of recipients for both third and fourth quarter honors, which made for a long list of volunteers. A total of 26 individuals were honored for their work in their respective units and communities.

Each volunteer had to meet minimum requirements in order to be nominated for Volunteer of the Quarter. They must have completed at least 25 hours of service; volunteered work did not have to be within Fort Riley; and the volunteer could perform work in any of the surrounding communities.

"Kansans Politics and Government: The Clash of Political Cultures" by the University of Nebraska Press. His work has been published in a number of political science journals, including Social Science Quarterly, American Review of Politics and Kansas Government Journal.

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as long as they reported the hours to their unit.

Col. Michael Pappal, 1st HBCT commander, started the ceremony with the simple words of "thank you" that set the tone throughout the evening. He expressed the importance of showing appreciation toward those who take time out to help others.

The volunteers ranged from civilians to a whole battalion being recognized for its efforts.

Spc. Joseph Pope, Troop B, 4th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, was one of the representatives for his unit. The battalion, also known as the "Pale Riders," recently received the Helping Hand award.

Pope, along with four other Pale Riders, also won the Department of the Army's Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. To earn the medal, each

Soldier had to volunteer 100 or more hours in a quarter.

Pope volunteered his time with the Adopt-a-School program, which partners his unit with Council Grove, Kan. Pope lent his combat medic skills for high school athletic games and served food to the students. He said he felt honored to be recognized for something he enjoys doing.

"It's very gratifying to be able to be recognized for something that helps out kids and the community," he said. "It is a humbling experience to go out and serve the community other than just what we do as Soldiers. Being able to branch out to the community and serve our country in different ways are the true Army values."

For spouse Kelly Ratai, a mother of four children who volunteers with Troop C, 4th

Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt., volunteering became therapeutic while her husband was away on a deployment, she said, adding she found volunteering as a positive way to spend her time during the absence of her Soldier.

"It keeps you from sitting at home and listening to the clock tick. It gets you out of yourself and makes you realize that you're not in this alone, and there are a lot of people going through the same thing, at the same time," Ratai said. "By the time you start to feel sorry for yourself, get out and give back to others."

Volunteers who received brigade recognition also will be considered for the 1st Infantry Division's Quarterly Volunteer Recognition Ceremony Feb. 7.

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