

## COMMUNITY CORNER

## Campaign encourages Families to save, reduce debt

By Col. William Clark  
GARRISON COMMANDER

A time when people are filing taxes and receiving tax returns, finances are on the mind. During this time, the Department of Defense and Fort Riley will participate in the Military Saves Campaign from Feb. 19 to 26.

Military Saves encourages low- and moderate-income individuals to save money, reduce debt and build wealth. The campaign is a growing network of organizations and individuals committed to helping and supporting military members and their loved ones build personal savings arsenals to provide for their immediate and long-term financial needs.

Military Saves was developed and tested by its nonprofit sponsor, Consumer Federation of America and the military services from

2003 to 2006 and launched throughout the DoD on Feb. 25, 2007. It is part of two larger campaigns – the DoD Financial Readiness Campaign and the national America Saves campaign.

The campaign's lifeblood is in its partners, organizations that see the value in working together to empower members, employees, customers and clients to become financially stable through saving, debt reduction and wealth-building over time.

The campaign's slogan, "Start Small, Think Big," demonstrates the long-term amounts.

While it is an ongoing



Col. Clark

campaign, the entire military community comes together to focus on financial readiness during Military Saves Week, the last full week in February. This year's theme, "Set a Goal, Make a Plan, Save Automatically," encourages planning for one's financial future.

We want our Soldiers and Family members to develop healthy financial habits and avoid common financial pitfalls, like overreliance on credit, spending beyond one's means and the inability to retire.

At Fort Riley, we will focus on saving by starting with our youngest members – the children. At on-post elementary schools, students will participate in contests, learn about savings and take bank tours.

To learn more, become a fan of Military Saves at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) by searching "Military Saves." Follow the campaign on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/militarysaves](http://www.twitter.com/militarysaves).

Most importantly, make a pledge – a pledge to invest in your financial security – by visiting [www.militarysaves.org](http://www.militarysaves.org) and clicking on "Take a Pledge."

Military Savers who take the pledge can receive monthly Military Saves and eWealth Coach emails with tips and encouragement to help them stay on track to their saving goals.

If you're ready to commit to your financial future, sign the Saver Pledge – "I will help myself by saving money, reducing debt and building wealth over time. I will help my Family and my country by encouraging other Americans to build wealth, not debt."

To comment on this article or send a suggestion for a future Community Corner topic, email [rlc.post.newspaper@comus.army.mil](mailto:rlc.post.newspaper@comus.army.mil).



Jessica Hughes, a senior at Junction City High School, nominated by her parents, Lt. Col. Brian Hughes, 2nd GSAB, 1st Avn. Regt., CAB, and Christina Hughes, was recently named a finalist for the 2012 Military Child of the Year contest.

COURTESY PHOTO

## Teen named Military Child of Year finalist

By: Melony Gabbert  
1ST INF. DIV. POST

"I'm just another military kid. I'm like a lot of military kids. We should all win something like this. There will be no hurt feelings if I don't win. I am honored to have made it this far. I will be proud of who(m) ever does win," said Fort Riley teen Jessica Hughes about being named a 2012 Operation Homefront Military Child of the Year semi-finalist.

Hughes recently learned she was one of 20 military children who were semi-finalists in the competition after her mother received an email and winners were listed on the Operation Homefront website.

Twenty semi-finalists were named from each of the following military branches – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. One winner will be named from each branch. Winners will receive \$5,000 and will be flown, with a parent or guardian, to Washington for a special recognition ceremony in April.

Once semi-finalists were announced, they were interviewed by Operation Homefront staff. Hughes was interviewed over the phone.

According to Hughes, they asked how she coped with moves, how she feels about volunteering and some background information.

The information gathered from each semi-finalist will be judged by a committee, she said.

According to [www.operationhomefront.net](http://www.operationhomefront.net), "ideal candidates for the Military Child of the Year Award demonstrate resilience and strength of character and thrive in the face of the challenges of military life. They demonstrate leadership within their Families and within their communities."

Hughes, a senior at Junction City High School, was nominated by her parents, Lt. Col. Brian Hughes, 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, and his wife, Christina Hughes.

At first, Hughes said, she was apprehensive.

"Honestly, I'm a kind of shy person, so I was thinking, 'Oh, my gosh. Why did you do that?'"

If I win, I would have to speak in front of people," she said.

Once a semi-finalist, Hughes said she was "pretty excited about it because with all of the other military children, I never thought I would make it as far as I did."

Hughes plays on the high school's volleyball team. She also volunteers her time to many organizations on post, which she said she enjoys.

"It makes me feel better to know I am helping out," Hughes said.

One organization Hughes volunteered to work with is Operation Santa Claus, an on-post holiday toy drive.

"Operation Santa Claus was awesome. I loved every minute of it. One minute we would be wrapping presents, and then we would be taking parents upstairs to help them find gifts," she said. "It was like shopping, but not for us. It felt really good to know that kids would be able to wake up on Christmas and open presents."

Hughes also volunteers at the post library on Custer Hill. While it started out as a means to earn volunteer hours for high school, Hughes said she discovered she loves working there, even though she is not a book lover.

Hughes spends at least five hours a week locating books for patrons, shelving books and conducting inventory, she said.

Hughes also helps with Family readiness group meetings. Along with her mother and sister, Jessica, she helps plan meetings, activities for Families and activities for children while their parents meet, as well as babysits during meetings, sets and cleans up for parties and make meals for people following a birth, death or an illness.

"I have been volunteering ever since I can remember," Hughes said of her busy schedule. Over the past four years, Hughes said she knows she has volunteered more than 300 hours. She is scheduled to receive an award at a volunteer recognition ceremony in April.

Hughes said it was a very difficult decision for her Family to make regarding the move to Fort Riley. The option was for

## RSA program impresses attendees

By Melony Gabbert  
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Nineteen military spouses are now the first 2012 graduates of the Resilient Spouse Academy at Fort Riley. The 10th academy – Jan. 30 to Feb. 3 – left graduates expressing their desire to have the event become mandatory.

Military spouse and graduate Deborah Jackson said the program should be mandatory for military and civilians. Fellow graduate and military spouse Brandy Pearson agreed, adding she strongly felt incoming military Families should attend RSA.

"You learn a lot. There are a lot of good resources (and) information," Pearson said.

Pearson also said the program adds an "extra outlet" and participants become friends.

Jackson shared Pearson's sentiments, saying the program allows for self-reflection, learning coping skills and bonding.

"The program is wonderful," she said.

Instructor Aaron Harrop, employee assistance professional, Army Substance Abuse Program, teaches the drug and alcohol portion of RSA, as well as part of the two-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skill Training, or ASIST, and is



Melony Gabbert | POST

RSA instructor, Aaron Harrop, employee assistance professional, Army Substance Abuse Program, third from right, leads a group discussion on suicide during the Jan. 31 RSA Applied Suicide Intervention Skill Training. ASIST is a two-day component of the five-day program that trains participants on warning signs to suicide.

he co-authored of the Air Force's suicide prevention program.

"By far, ASIST is the best training I have experienced in prevention," Harrop said. "The model works if people give it a chance."

ASIST trains course participants to be the "emotional paramedics of suicide," he said, and it is designed to allow participants to recognize symptoms, step in at a point when another needs help and get that person connected to help.

"The more people know, the more likely they are to intervene," he said, adding resilience can be learned.

"When they were putting the RSA together, I saw

how they did it," Harrop said. "From my perspective, I see people get a lot out of it."

In addition to substance abuse and ASIST training, participants were exposed to eight hours of master resiliency training, as well as the topics of finances, domestic violence and sexual assault, said Julie Zwiebel, Army Family Team Building, Army Family Action Plan and RSA program manager.

During this RSA, one thing was different, Zwiebel said.

"We really wanted to highlight the military Family life consultants, MFLCs. We wanted them to have a special spotlight," she said.

While many are familiar with MFLCs, Zwiebel said, she especially wanted participants to know what MFLCs can do and what resources they can lead to.

MFLCs are licensed behavioral health specialists, who are available on a short-term basis to help Soldiers and Families work through various issues. They all hold at least a master's degree, in fields that range from social work to psychology.

For more information on RSA or MFLCs, call Army Community Services at 785-239-9435 or search "Resilient Spouses Fort Riley" on Facebook.

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See TEEN, page 14