

COMMUNITY CORNER

Commander urges community to report child abuse, neglect

By Col. William Clark
GARRISON COMMANDER

This year's theme for the Army's observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month in April is "It's no secret... Everyone can help. Keep Army children safe and healthy."

As the Fort Riley garrison commander, I promise to advocate for the protection of our military children, provide the resources our staff needs to combat child abuse and encourage prevention of, not reaction to these tough situations. But I also need your help in keeping our children safe and healthy.

Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up under the protection of a loving family. This month, we recommit ourselves to that vision. Our community must continue to participate in successful prevention programs that ask our members to "recognize, rethink, reach out and report," promoting safety and wellness.

In addition to Child Abuse Prevention Month, April is Month of the Military Child. Let's celebrate our children and reflect on the promises we can make to keep them safe and healthy.

As a parent, recognize your limitations and know that it's OK to seek help. Many of our families live far from their

extended families. Consider the Army your extended family and take advantage of all of the support that Family offers.

As a neighbor or a friend, you can help out a stressed parent who needs a break. Offer to watch their children while they run errands or take time for themselves. Remind them it's OK to ask for help.

As a commander or Family readiness group leader, get to know your families and their needs. Be a leader who takes an active role in the prevention of child abuse.

And, if at any point, anyone suspects child abuse or neglect, report your suspicions to the military police by calling 785-239-MPMP (6767).

No matter who you are, I encourage you to take advantage of the many parenting classes offered through Army Community Service. Increasing your knowledge as a parent not only makes your life easier, but it helps your children be the best they can be and builds resilience in our community.

The Family Advocacy Program provides commander and troop education, as well as parent education programs that



Col. Clark

include free child care, child safety classes and stress management classes. To arrange for a class, call FAP at 785-239-9435 or visit the ACS page at www.riley.army.mil under Family Services or www.riley.mwr.com.

A great upcoming opportunity that will close our Child Abuse Prevention Month and Month of the Military Child is Scream-Free Parenting, a presentation by guest speaker Hal Edward Runkel that will explain the "five truths every parent needs to know."

Scream-Free parenting will be from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. May 1 or from 9 to 11 a.m. May 2 at Child Youth and School Services, Building 6620 Normandy Drive on Custer Hill. Refreshments will be provided for both sessions.

For more information or to pre-register, call 785-239-9435. Free Scream-Free books and DVDs will be given to the first 200 families to register.

Together, we can prevent child abuse.

If you would like to comment on this article, or suggest a topic to be covered in the Community Corner, email rile.post.newspaper@comus.army.mil.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Parents should educate children about safety to prevent injury

By Christine Martin
LIFESCAPE

Safety education is the best way to prevent unintentional injury – the No. 1 killer of children – and to protect your children from crime. Your child should know how to recognize and avoid potential threats, as well as how to react to dangerous situations. Just like fire drills, parents need to repeat lessons about safety over and over. You also need to continually evaluate potential risks to your child's well-being.

PRESCHOOL

Setting examples, like

wearing bicycle helmets and locking doors, and making statements like, "Mommy and Daddy always wear seat belts" or "Always stop, look and listen before crossing the street" are good ways to start educating a young child, even before he or she is at an age when you can talk with him or her about specific safety issues.

Parents also must teach their children that a stranger is anyone they don't know. Many young children assume only bad, scary-looking or unfriendly people are strangers. As your child gets older, you can talk to her about ways of responding to strangers in different situations.

AGE 4 TO GRADE SCHOOL

Focus on what your child can do to stay safe instead of the bad things that can happen. Doing so will empower him to act and inform him – not scare him – that threats to personal safety do exist. Teach your child to say "no" in situations when he or she feels uncomfortable or senses danger.

"What if..." games and role-playing are great ways to teach your child how to respond to dangerous situations, like getting separated at the zoo, a stranger offering a ride,

See SAFETY, page 14

RILEY BEAR'S SIS GETS NAME



Pamela Redford | POST

It's official – Riley Bear's little sister has a name: Scarlet. She and her brother marched with about 400 preschool children from Fort Riley child development centers and staff from Child, Youth and School Age Services April 10 during the Heroes of the Future parade in celebration of Month of the Military Child.