

COMMUNITY CORNER

Education basis for successful future, post offers college courses

By Col. William Clark
GARRISON COMMANDER

On Dec. 13, I celebrated the graduation of dozens of Soldiers, Families and civilians at the Postwide Graduation Ceremony. These ceremonies are conducted twice a year to recognize the hard efforts our citizens put into their education.

A strong education can be the basis for a successful future, and Fort Riley offers several educational services. Whether one credit hour away from a cap and gown or just starting course work, Fort Riley's Education Services, Directorate of Human Resources, can help make those college dreams a reality through a variety of opportunities in the classroom and online.

The same way I challenged you last week to start thinking about your fitness goals for 2013 now – as opposed to just as a New Year's resolution, I challenge you to think about your educational goals as well.

The following options are offered through Education Services for those wanting to learn more in 2013:

• **Leaders Skills Enhancement Training Courses**
This on-duty class is designed to train non-commissioned officers and other Soldiers who exhibit potential for promotion and increased leadership responsibility. More than 42 different LSEC courses



Col. Clark

are available. Classes are open, at no cost, to active-duty military, retirees, Department of Defense civilians, their Family members and members of the National Guard and Reserve components. Courses are during the duty day, five days a week, for six weeks.

• **General Educational Development Program**
The GED program is designed to help students 16 years and older earn a Kansas high school diploma. Classes are available through Barton Community College.

• **Tuition is free for Soldiers and Family members, and there is no cost for books.** The final GED test is free for Soldiers and \$85 for Family members. Classes are Monday through Friday at the student's choice of time.

• **English Second Language**

Program
The ESL class is designed to help students speak confidently and effectively in everyday situations, write and use English grammar, achieve accent reduction, increase reading ability and expand English vocabulary. Classes are Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

• **Basic Skills Education Program**

This is an on-duty program that provides instruction in the basic skills of reading, math and language, as well as providing general technical improvement classes to assist Soldiers preparing to retake the Armed Forces Classification test. BSEP courses are three weeks in length, three hours per day, five days per week.

• **Consortium of Colleges and Universities**
Barton Community Col-

lege, Central Texas College, Kansas State University, Southwestern College, University of Mary, Central Michigan University and Upper Iowa University work with Fort Riley to offer degree and certification programs. College classes are open to anyone in the Central Flint Hills Region, so civilians can take on-post college classes at the same tuition rate as Soldiers. College classes usually run in eight-week cycles.

• **Testing Services**
Education Services offers testing services, including Army Personnel Testing, along with ACT and SAT testing for active-duty Soldiers; college testing for proctored exams; and College-Level Examination Program/Defense Activity for non-traditional education support testing. College-Level Examination Program exams

are free for active military – the first time taking the test – and \$77 for Family members.

• **Tutoring Services**
Free tutoring is available on a walk-in basis to students enrolled in Fort Riley Consortium, LSEC and BSEP classes at the Learning Center, 7656 Graves St., Custer Hill. The center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday; from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday; and from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays.

For more information, call 785-239-6481 or visit <http://riley.army.mil/UnitPage.aspx?unit=DHR.Educ>.

If you would like to comment on this column or suggest a topic for Community Corner, send an e-mail to usarmy.riley.incom.mbc.post-news@army.mil.

Winter weather brings challenges to canines

K-STATE MEDIA RELATIONS

MANHATTAN – With winter on the way, a Kansas State University veterinarian says dog owners have plenty of options to keep their fur-ever friends comfortable and happy – even when the weather turns nasty.

"A general rule of thumb is if it is too cold for you outside, it is too cold for your dog," said Susan Nelson, clinical associate professor and veterinarian, K-State College of Veterinary Medicine's Pet Health Center.

But Nelson said there are several factors, such as size, that help some dogs tolerate the cold better than others.

"Small stature and short coats, such as with a Chihuahua, make dogs less tolerant of cold weather. Some of these dogs may not even tolerate cooler temperatures that are still above freezing for very long," she said. "Larger body mass and longer, plusher coats allow dogs to tolerate lower temperatures for a longer duration – think Siberian Husky."

Another factor is the time allotted for acclimating a dog to colder temperatures. Nelson said dogs tolerate a gradual reduction in temperature better versus a shorter one because it allows for adequate coat development and adjustment to the cooler temperatures.

Many dogs, primarily medium- and larger-size canines, can live comfortably outdoors in colder temperatures if their owners provide them proper shelter. Nelson said this includes well-insulated, properly-sized doghouses that have adequate bedding and doors – preferably with a flap, if the dogs will allow it – that face away from north winds.

"These dogs may appreciate being brought inside during frigid weather; however, it is best to keep them in a cooler room, like a basement or garage, as they have thick coats and tend to get hot in the warm house," she said. "If temperatures keep an outside dog inside for more than a few days, you should gradually reintroduce the dog to the outdoors. You could start by letting the dog go back outside during the daytime first, then eventually through the night."

Coats, sweaters and boots for canines can give some added protection, Nelson said, but they also have some drawbacks.

"Watch for choking hazards, such as buttons, on coats and sweaters," she said. "Ensure they are made of breathable fabrics and that the fabric doesn't irritate the dog. They should only be worn when supervised, as the dog could get caught up in them. Also, if the apparel gets wet, it can promote hypothermia that results from chilling caused from the body being in contact with the cold, wet fabric."

Boots can help protect paws from the snow and ice, but Nelson said make sure they fit correctly, can be put on easily and will stay on, and have good traction.

Along with cold temperatures, dogs face other dangers

in winter. Nelson said some things to watch for, both inside and out, include:

• **Ice melt.** It can be very irritating to paws, so wipe your dog's feet when it comes inside.

• **Antifreeze.** It takes only a small amount to be lethal to a dog. Make sure the dog won't come in contact with the substance, especially if the dog sleeps in the garage. Also, don't let dogs drink from water puddles in the street gutters because these also may be contaminated with antifreeze.

• **Uneven or sharp ice.** It can cut a dog's pads.

• **Snow.** It can form painful iceballs on the undersides of a dog's paws.

• **Slips and falls.** Just like with humans, dogs can take a tumble on the ice and injure themselves.

• **Rat poison.** Its use increases in the winter months. While it may keep pests away, it can be lethal to dogs if ingested directly or if they eat dead mice or rats that have ingested the poison.

• **Frostbite and hypothermia.** Dogs can suffer from both.

• **Burns.** Watch dogs around fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, candles and other objects with flames.

• **Poop-pour.** It may have a pleasing smell, but it can be toxic to dogs if ingested.

• **Arthritis.** If your dog suffers from arthritis, cold weather can worsen the symptoms.

• **Dehydration.** Keep an eye on your dog's water bowl to ensure it doesn't freeze when temperatures drop. Heated water bowls are available that can help prevent the problem. Also, make sure the bowls are not made of metal – Nelson said to remember what happened to the boy in the movie "A Christmas Story" who stuck his tongue to a metal flagpole.

• **Inadequate calorie consumption.** Owners often forget to feed their outdoor dogs a bit more during the winter months when the animal needs higher calorie requirements to keep warm.

Daily exercise also is important for dogs, regardless of the season. If it's too cold or snowy for a walk, Nelson said a dog can still get a good workout inside if a person has the space and room in his or her accommodations.

Some of the following exercises can be done indoors: having the dog jump through hoops; putting the dog on a treadmill, under close supervision; playing indoor fetch or search games for hidden toys and treats; a game of tug-of-war; practicing basic training, like fetching and sitting; letting a dog play with an interactive dog toy, like food puzzles; playing hide-and-seek; having the dog do leg-weave exercises or dance exercises; and setting up tunnels for smaller dogs to run through or other agility-like obstacles.

As always, it is best to consult with a veterinarian about a dog's ability to tolerate the cold and if it is healthy enough to do the above-mentioned exercises, Nelson said.