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Army Family Covenant providing programs, major savings for Soldiers, Families in Europe

U.S. Army Installation Management Command-Europe Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- The Army Family Covenant has delivered more than 150,000 free hours of respite care in Europe since October, and saved Soldiers and their Families more than \$1.5 million while participating in Child, Youth and School Services activities.



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Child, Youth and School Services programs at Installation Management Command-Europe garrisons have delivered more than 150,000 free hours of respite care during fiscal year 2009, thanks to the Army Family Covenant.

Since the covenant was established roughly 18 months ago, Army leadership says, significant progress has been made in maturing a program that has provided more than a million free respite care hours at garrisons worldwide.

Closer to home, in the past year Installation Management Command-Europe has provided eligible families 150,424 free hours of respite care, saving them \$297,000, said Cerri Verschraegen, region program manager for CYS Services.

“And we provided those same eligible families with an additional 36,880 hours of care at a 50 percent discount, saving them another \$101,265,” said Verschraegen.

Another \$273,521 has been saved as the result of 1,929 classes available through the School of Knowledge, Inspiration, Exploration and Skills, or SKIES, program and 1,705 sports registrations -- all free to eligible participants.

“When you add up all of the benefits we have provided from October 2008 to May 2009, we have saved families \$1,570,606,” noted Verschraegen. “I would say this is a

significant program for Army Families. It contributes not only to their stress relief, but also to their financial health.”

The Army Family Covenant now provides 16 free respite hours per child per month for children of deployed Soldiers, starting 30 days prior to the deployment and continuing until 60 days after.

Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation officials are quick to note that parents need not be current CYS Services patrons to use deployment cycle support respite care, and that any custodial parent or legal guardian caring for a child of a deployed Soldier or Department of Defense civilian employee is eligible.

Care is provided in numerous ways, including designated Child Development Center spaces; family child care homes; summer camps for school-age children; trained babysitters referred to parents by CYS Services outreach offices; and parent/child play groups.



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