

COMMUNITY CORNER

Post to 'step up' services, infrastructure for anticipated 2012 Homecoming

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

Some of you may have heard talk about the "2012 Homecoming." If you have, this should give you a better idea of what Fort Riley is facing and what we have planned.

If you haven't heard about it, the bottom line is that in 2012, Fort Riley will see the largest number of troops with boots on the ground in Kansas since the mid 1990s. While we've always had a large number of troops assigned to Fort Riley, many of them have been deployed over the past decade.

With some operations winding down in the Middle East, more of our troops are coming home for longer periods of time. Beginning in May 2011, we'll start to notice this more on post, and while troop deployments are always fluid, we're preparing to have five brigades—around 18,000 Soldiers—home in 2012.

I've seen and heard comments in various forums wondering what we're doing about certain issues on post—traffic congestion and health care accessibility to name a couple. What I want our community to know is that we are planning for this influx of troops, and we aren't ignoring your comments.

A working group, led by Fort Riley's Plans, Analysis and Integration Office, and attended by representatives from all of our directorates and tenant organizations, has been planning for the 2012 Homecoming during this past year.

Some of the challenges we will face as a garrison with an increased Soldier population and longer dwell times include an increase in use of garrison services and facilities, while future garrison budgets are projected to decline. Those employees who provide services to our Soldiers and Families won't be getting needed extra help, but an increased workload. And, this isn't a situation unique to Fort Riley. Multiple garrisons around the Army are facing an influx of troops.

With these challenges in mind, our garrison employees have been working on how we can continue to provide the best possible support for our Soldiers and Families so they can accomplish their missions. We have adapted to the

Army's ever-changing missions in the past and will continue to adapt to provide services as our situation continues to change. In some of the initial meetings, the 2012 Homecoming working group identified 10 friction points that will arise as Fort Riley sees an increase in troops on the ground.

Training resource management
With more troops on the ground, there will be more units vying for time to train on our ranges. Training resources include not only the ranges, but training areas, simulators and training aids as well.

Unit sustainment
This friction point includes more demand on services like the Central Issue Facility, dining facilities, household goods and the ID card section.

Traffic and Infrastructure
One of the more high-visibility friction points is traffic congestion. Possible solutions to this are being worked, but as troop strength at Fort Riley increases, we all need to be prepared for longer wait times at access control points.

Education
This friction point encompasses both mandatory unit training, as well as personal and professional development.

Soldier/Family Services
Community recreation, Army Community Service, business operations like the bowling alley and golf course, the Post Exchange and Commissary and Child, Youth and School Services activities all will be impacted by an increase in troops, and with them, an increase in Family members.

Schools
Fort Riley's school district, Geary County Unified School District 475, is over capacity. Additional school requirements have been identified and potential funding sources acquired. While this friction point has been incorporated into the 2012 planning, it also has a separate working group dedicated solely to this issue.

Facilities
In order to house all of our returning units, garrison staff and other tenant units on Fort Riley, the Directorate of Public Works' master planners work any restructuring or infrastructure changes needed on post.



Col. Brown

Medical

Access to care, clinical space and the number of care providers are concerns within the medical friction point.

The Medical Activity on post is continually making improvements in these areas and continues to plan and recruit for future needs.

Employment

In the employment category, Fort Riley will be looking to recruit for specialized positions such as health care providers, child care providers and general services employees.

Over the next several years, there also will be an increase in garrison employees eligible for retirement. A focus on work force development and managing customer expectations are potential mitigations for this friction point.

Information technology
Operability, maintenance and network infrastructure are several areas within information technology our Network Enterprise Center is looking into for the 2012 Homecoming.

Off-post housing
While Fort Riley doesn't have direct control over housing offered off post, leaders have been working with communities in the Central Flint Hills Region to identify gaps in housing available for our Soldiers and their Families. Our Housing Services Office provides needed support to those Families looking for housing off post.

I've given a brief overview here of the areas where we are planning for increased use of services. Keep an eye out for the 2012 Homecoming logo used with this column in future issues of the Post. Over the next year, we'll be getting more in depth into these issues to help keep our Soldiers and Family members aware of what's happening on post.

And, as always, if you have questions or ideas to share, please use one of our feedback methods—ICE, Facebook, community forums—to let us know.

If you would like to comment on this column or suggest a topic for the Community Corner, e-mail riley.post.newspaper@com.us.army.mil.

ASAP looking for personal stories for 'Shoulder-to-Shoulder' video

By Katherine Rosario
1ST INF. DIV. POST

The Army Substance Abuse Program is looking for Soldiers, Family members and civilian employees to share their stories for the suicide prevention video, "Shoulder-to-Shoulder."

The 20-minute video will showcase stories about suicide and how people helped someone contemplating suicide or learned how to see the signs of someone asking for help.

The video marks the third in a series of films about suicide prevention.

Officials at Fort Riley volunteered and were selected for the second time in a row to participate in the filming and host the focus groups and interviews.

Focus groups will meet Jan. 11 to 12 to help determine how the interviews will be conducted. Interviews will be filmed Jan. 12 and 14 by a professional camera crew.

"We are looking for Soldiers, Family members and people who work on Fort Riley, who helped someone who had thoughts of suicide and became more resilient from the experience," said Heidi Oesterle, suicide prevention manager.

Oesterle said she also is encouraging anyone who has had thoughts about suicide to tell his or her story.

"We also want people who considered suicide themselves to tell their story of how they got help and recovered," she said.

The video will be distributed to every installation as a training tool during installation or office training days to help build resiliency.

Volunteers will be accepted from any office. Interest has already been generated in the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training classes and the Resilient Spouse Academy, Oesterle said.

For more information or to volunteer to tell a personal story, call Oesterle at 785-240-5169.

attorney, property documents and medical instructions are important to keep in a safe or airtight bag," Stewart added.

For animals in the home, he said, it is important to make sure there is enough food and water for them, along with an extra leash, travel case and documents on recent shots.

Properly insulating a home is an important step in keeping warm if the power goes out, and there is no heat, he said.

"Make sure your home is properly insulated," Stewart said. "Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to keep out cold air. Insulate pipes to prevent freezing."

To prevent water damage from burst pipes, keep the temperature above freezing, even when away on vacation.

Stewart also said to make sure the gas tank in the car is full to keep the fuel line from freezing and for emergency use, like charging cell phones when the power is out. Also, always remember to keep the garage

open when turning the car on, he said, because vehicles emit a large amount of carbon monoxide that can be deadly.

"Before winter hits, make sure you have an adequate amount of winter clothing and blankets for your Family," he said.

"During a winter storm, Stewart said, people should stay inside and monitor the radio or TV for more information or instructions.

"Eat regularly and drink plenty of fluids. Practice fire safety, check the batteries in your smoke alarms, and make sure there is plenty of ventilation if you are using a heat source that can produce hazardous smoke or fumes. Dress in several layers of warm clothing," he said.

Fires can still start during a winter storm, Stewart said, and it is important to practice fire safety.

"Use battery-operated lanterns," he said.

See WINTER, page 16

Ready Army recommends being prepared for winter storms

By Katherine Rosario
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Winter storms can bring about heavy snowfall, sleet, power outages and cold temperatures, as well as do damage to homes and buildings. Ready Army recommends preparing for the extreme cold and heavy snowfall in advance, even if people ride the storm out in their homes.

Erik Stewart, Installation Emergency Management specialist, said winter storms can be debilitating and dangerous and can affect everyone, even those who usually experience mild winters.

"Heavy snowfall can be blinding for drivers and dangerous for those it traps indoors. Winter storms may also include high winds, sleet, freezing rain, frozen roads, power outages and dangerously cold temperatures," Stewart said.

If people become snowed in at home, Stewart suggested making sure there is at least 1 gallon of water per person per day and nonperishable food for at least five days. A manual can opener can come in handy if the electricity goes out.

"Make sure there is an up-to-date first aid kit for the home that includes prescription medications and medical equipment if necessary," Stewart said.

Keeping personal sanitation supplies, including moist towelettes, garbage bags, flashlights with extra batteries, a radio with extra batteries or a hand crank, cash in the event that credit card machines are down, local maps and a Family emergency plan also is important, he said.

"Important documents such as medical and financial power of attorney, property documents and medical instructions are important to keep in a safe or airtight bag," Stewart added.

For animals in the home, he said, it is important to make sure there is enough food and water for them, along with an extra leash, travel case and documents on recent shots.

Properly insulating a home is an important step in keeping warm if the power goes out, and there is no heat, he said.

"Make sure your home is properly insulated," Stewart said. "Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to keep out cold air. Insulate pipes to prevent freezing."

To prevent water damage from burst pipes, keep the temperature above freezing, even when away on vacation.

Stewart also said to make sure the gas tank in the car is full to keep the fuel line from freezing and for emergency use, like charging cell phones when the power is out. Also, always remember to keep the garage

Attackers beware: Hearts Apart to teach spouses self defense

By Katherine Rosario
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Hearts Apart will host a self-defense class for spouses and teenagers from 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 12 at Army Community Service, Building 7264 Normandy Drive, Custer Hill.

The Junction City Police Department will teach participants martial arts techniques for defending themselves against an attacker.

"We did it last year, and we got a great response from people who took the class. It's a good way to prepare yourself when you're alone in a dark parking lot at night or need to defend your Family or home," said Theresa Gale, Hearts Apart

coordinator.

Gale said the techniques learned at the class will help people feel more confident when venturing out at night.

"If you're walking to your car in a parking lot or just walking down the street in your neighborhood, you (will) feel more prepared if you know what to do should something happen," she said.

The class will teach a person what to do and what not to do while trying to defend him or herself.

"It's not a crime to defend yourself, and it's an important part of being a single parent or spouse when your husband or wife is deployed," she said.

Teenagers 15 years and older may attend the class with a parent.

For more information, call ACS at 785-239-9435.

HOUSE FILL AD