

COMMUNITY CORNER

Annual AER campaign to benefit Soldiers

By Col. Kevin Brown
GARRISON COMMANDER

Fort Riley's Soldiers will be asked to open their hearts and their wallets from April 5 to May 15 for the 2010 Army Emergency Relief campaign. This annual fundraiser is unique because those who give money are helping their fellow Soldiers, Family members and retirees right here in the Central Flint Hills Region.

Our Soldiers and their Families are feeling the pressures of deployments. As a post, we're moving at mach speed in several different directions to do our part in overseas operations. As our 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team prepares to come home after duty in Iraq, the Combat Aviation Brigade, division headquarters and 1st Sustainment Brigade have just left. These deployments place emotional strain on Families. Add to that strain the costs of fuel, insurance and a host of other financial costs, and before long, a normally stable household may be living paycheck to paycheck. One unforeseen financial emergency can be devastating for many of our individual Soldiers as

well as those with Families. That's where Fort Riley's AER program can help.

What is AER?
AER got its start in 1942 when the secretary of War and Army chief of staff incorporated the private, non-profit organization. Since then, emergency funds have been in place to help Soldiers at a moment's notice. This could be funds in the form of an interest-free loan or a grant to help someone who may need to pay rent, have repairs made on a privately owned vehicle, or possibly to buy an airline ticket for a funeral service in another state.

There's even a scholarship program within AER to help spouses and Family members pay tuition for undergraduate degrees. This program is based on financial need, Family size and other circumstances.

How can AER help me?
AER is all about rapidly responding to our Soldiers' needs. Fort Riley commanders



Col. Brown

and first sergeants can use the Commanders Referral Program to approve AER loans up to \$1,000 in order to immediately resolve a Soldier's financial issue.

After filling out a simple, one-page application, you'll need to bring your most recent Leave and Earnings Statement to your appointment with an AER caseworker. From the time you sit down with the caseworker, AER's goal is to have you out the door with the money you need in 15 minutes or less.

If your spouse has been deployed, AER also can help you through tough times. You'll need to bring a power of attorney, your military ID card and any substantiating documents to your AER case worker appointment.

How can you help?

On a national basis, in 2009 AER provided more than \$79 million in assistance to more than 71,000 Soldiers and Families. On Fort Riley, Soldiers generously donated more than \$89,000. That's a lot of money, but consider that AER gave out almost \$1.7 million last year to nearly 1,940 Soldiers, Family members and

retirees on this post alone. The campaign goal this year is \$90,000.

In the coming weeks, you will be approached either in formation or individually by your unit project officer. You can donate through payroll allotment, check or cash. When you're asked to give, please take a look at the Soldier standing next to you in formation. He or she could be going through a rough time, but you might not be aware of those troubles. You may think it will never happen to you, and I hope you're right.

If you have questions about AER, check with your unit project officer. If you are a Family member, call 785-239-9435 and ask for an AER staff member.

When you contribute to AER, think of it as putting aside money for your battle buddy's rainy day. Emergencies never hit on a convenient schedule, but when they do, AER will be there to help.

If you would like to comment on this article, or suggest a topic to be covered in the Community Corner, e-mail riley.post.newspaper@conus.army.mil.



A young boy sits in the gunners seat of an armored Humvee display provided by the 3rd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. during Bullitt County's annual Kidsfest March 13.

COURTESY PHOTO

201st Soldiers meet Bullitt Co. residents

By Spc. Michael Knight
3RD BCT

SHEPHERDSVILLE, Ky. — Bullitt County children stared at the entertainment that surrounded them. Vendors offered candy, food and balloons while clowns strolled around trying to make people smile. Local businesses set up informational booths to help children understand what was available to them in their county.

On March 13, Bullitt County hosted its 11th annual Kidsfest at the Parquet Springs Conference Centre and Expo Hall in Shepherdsville, Ky. The festival entertained, educated and promoted learning in Bullitt County children.

The festival also included a chance for the adult residents to meet with the local officials.

Nine Soldiers assigned to Company A, 201st Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, appeared in full combat gear at the Kidsfest. The battalion partnered with Bullitt County through the Fort Knox Community Partnership Program. This program helps build and

continues a relationship between the community and Fort Knox units. It was created to educate both the Soldiers and residents of the local areas.

The unit also sent an armored Humvee fitted with a 50-caliber machine gun for a display for Kidsfest. Soldiers explained the truck and their gear to the children.

"Getting out and talking to public sure is nice, they really thank us a lot for what we do," said Spc. Jason Davis.

All the Soldiers greeted the children with warm smiles and let them crawl around the armored vehicle.

"I enjoy doing things for the kids. To see the smiles on their faces is my reward," said Staff Sgt. Carnell Leach.

Kidsfest not only educated the children and adults, it also helped create relationships between the community and the Soldiers. The Soldiers got to mingle with the public, getting to know people, and entertaining and informing children was something that they looked forward to being involved in.

"I love being out at public events and representing the Army and talking with the kids," said Pfc. Don May.

SETTING A PATH



Teens brought up the lack of a painted crosswalk at the Trooper Avenue intersection by the new Post Exchange at a recent focus group. To fix the issue, Garrison Commander Col. Kevin Brown and Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Jen Mann met with a group of teens to paint the crosswalk striping. Lights for the crosswalk were also installed. Teens who helped with the project were Joshua Key, Fort Riley Middle School seventh grader; Azariah Holloway, Junction City Middle School seventh grader; Ayla Davis, Junction City High School sophomore; Dez-Rae Davis, Junction City Middle School sixth grader and KIAisia Davis, Washington Elementary School.

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