

## COMMUNITY CORNER

## AFAP offers community opportunity to voice opinion, create change

By Col. William Clark  
GARRISON COMMANDER

At Fort Riley, we are constantly striving to provide our Soldiers, Families, civilians and retirees a quality of life commensurate with their service. If you're wondering how you can help us do that, it's by giving us feedback. Your feedback helps guide our efforts; it helps us know what is important to you and what is not. Many venues exist to provide this feedback — through the Interactive Customer Evaluation or ICE

program and through social media sites such as [www.facebook.com/fortriley](http://www.facebook.com/fortriley) or [www.twitter.com/fortriley](http://www.twitter.com/fortriley).

One of your next opportunities to provide feedback is through the upcoming Army Family Action Plan conferences. AFAP has been in place since 1983. Since then, it has helped sustain our all-volunteer force by listening to and implementing



Col. Clark

suggestions from our Soldiers and Families at the installation-level on up to the Department of Defense.

Locally, there will be two conferences — one for teens and one for adults. The conference for teens is this weekend — from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 13 at the Middle School Teen Center. This conference is for middle school and high school students. The conference for adults will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 16 to 17 at Riley's Conference Center.

After the two days of discussion, each group will vote

on its top three issues and turn them in.

On the final day of the conference, each group will our brief issues to the senior commander and the garrison commander at 10:30 a.m. Oct. 18.

AFAP conferences are a great opportunity to come out and be part of a working group that discusses problems that require help at the highest levels of government and the military. It is an opportunity for you to express your concerns directly to the command team. Your participation is critical.

Issues discussed at the 2011 AFAP included:

- Lack of medical staff at Child Development Centers
- Assigning case managers to Families of Deceased Soldiers
- Extended hours for mail retrieval in the barracks
- Use of profanity by Soldiers
- Lack of indoor play areas on post

Since AFAP began, 691 issues have been worked, 128 legislative changes have been made, 179 DoD or Army policies have been revised, and 200 programs and services

have been improved at the Army level.

To submit an issue, visit Building 7264 on Custer Hill to get an AFAP form. Forms also are available via e-mail by contacting ACS at 785-239-9435 or [file.dmwacs@conus.army.mil](mailto:file.dmwacs@conus.army.mil).

For more information, call AFAP at 785-239-4593 or ACS at 785-239-9435.

If you would like to comment on this article, or suggest a topic for a future Community Corner, email [usarmy.riley.incom.mbx.post-newspaper@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.riley.incom.mbx.post-newspaper@mail.mil).

## Gold Star mom remembers son, honors memory by giving back

By Pamela Redford  
1ST INF. DIV. POST

Since 1936, the U.S. has acknowledged a very special group of people on the last Sunday of September — Gold Star Mothers.

This year, Survivor Outreach Services at Fort Riley honored the tradition by recognizing Gold Star Mothers and their Families during a chapel service Sept. 30 and by hosting a luncheon at the Lenny J. Wallace Reserve Center in Wichita.

The grieving process may be very difficult for Family members who have lost a loved one in service of the country.

For Anita Dixon, the process of healing from the loss of her son, Sgt. Evan Parker, has been a long journey.

Parker, a Kansas native, was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery Regiment, 20th Brigade Combat Team, Army Reserve, Honolulu, Hawaii as a fire support specialist when enemy forces attacked his dismounted patrol in Balad, Iraq, by throwing an explosive device from their moving vehicle.

Parker succumbed to his wounds on Oct. 26, 2005, at Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany three days after the incident. He was 25 and left behind two sons, Blake, 13, and Conner, 11.

Becoming a Gold Star Mother was especially difficult, Dixon said, because at the time the Army hadn't yet launched

a comprehensive survivor services program.

"It was very hard on me to work through process and dig things out myself — to hunt, search, find things that I needed along the way, she said.

"I can honestly say that the Army has been very giving for the last seven years — very, very giving. I still hear from his commanders and many of his friends on a regular basis."

Despite her struggle to piece together the resources she needed, it is through service to others who have lost a service member that Dixon has been able to transcend the pain of becoming a Gold Star Mother.

When Survivor Outreach Service was established at Fort Riley in 2008, she immediately stepped up to help Gold Star Families in the local area and across the state.

As a surviving Family member, Dixon has first-hand experience and insight to contribute to others like herself who may be searching for answers and resources to help them through the grieving process.

"I think there's so much information that a survivor doesn't understand at the time of their loss. They are reeling with their grief and with their pain that there's so much they need time to heal, recoup and calm down for. The SOS program is there for the Family to pick up when they get their bearings. There is so much the program offers survivors that they're not aware of from the

beginning," Dixon said. "The Families are able to get answers they need from this one program. It has exceeded by leaps and bounds in the past few years."

Dixon, a registered respiratory therapist in Wichita, networks and shares her knowledge with other survivors by attending Gold Star Family events across the state and helping the Dignity Memorial Homeless Veterans Burial Program.

She also is very active in Operation Freedom Memorial Foundation Inc. — a nonprofit organization that is seeking to construct a memorial in Veterans Memorial Park in Wichita to honor native Kansas service members who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

"This is what I do. I give back to the veterans and the service members ... Because everything I do is my act of healing and I do it honor and remembrance of my son and all the other fallen service members. By doing that, it just keeps my son alive in my heart. I am determined that he will never be forgotten. That's why I do what I do. It's my act of healing," Dixon said.

For more information on SOS, visit [www.riley.army.mil/UnitPage.aspx?unit=ACS\\_survivor&nav=FamSves](http://www.riley.army.mil/UnitPage.aspx?unit=ACS_survivor&nav=FamSves) or call 785-239-9435.

To learn more about Operation Freedom Memorial Foundation Inc., visit [www.ofm-ks.com](http://www.ofm-ks.com).

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

## Soldiers, parents also need to fight on the home front to protect Families

By Bob A. Clifton  
LMFT

*W*hether we defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. — Winston Churchill

With no explanation necessary, the idea we have a "battle to fight" makes plenty of sense for everyone who resides on a military installation.

We see our loved ones coming and going into battle on a regular basis. Yes, with tears, we watch our Soldiers depart, and, with hugs and smiles, we greet their return. And, the damage war has done to some bodies and the unfortunate loss of comrades also speaks to the cost of this battle.

Other battles exist, however, especially closer to and within our homes. Sometimes those battles mean experiencing major unexpected loss. Perhaps, we have a "wayward" child we fear for because of alcohol or drug addiction; some of our children experience regular taunting on the playground; maybe the battle is holding together a marriage that just seems to have insurmountable odds stacked against it. It's during those times we discover we need not look a thousand miles away to realize there is a battle to fight, and it's on our own front porch.

But, I submit to you these battles are very worthy of all the fight we have, and I want to share a few pearls of wisdom with you to help you become home battle ready to meet the needs of our children.

First, some battle worthy statistics:

- An estimated 10 million individuals, ages 12 to 20 years old, admitted being drinkers; 6.5 million were binge drinkers and 2 million heavy drinkers.

- The same regions of the brain that are activated when craving occurs in alcohol and drug addicts are also activated in video game addicts when they see images of computer games.

- The average age a child first sees a pornographic site is 11 years old.

- In a study of 600 American males and females of junior high school age and above, researcher Dr. Jennings Bryant found 91 percent of the males and 82 percent of the females admitted having been exposed to X-rated, hard-core pornography. More than 66 percent of the males and 40 percent of the females reported wanting to try out some of the sexual behaviors they had witnessed. And, among high school students, 31 percent of the males and 18 percent of the females admitted actually doing some of the things they had seen in the pornography within a few days after exposure.

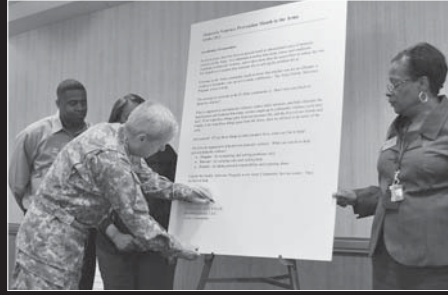
Secondly, what is our responsibility in this battle

to fight? Some things we have to consider are how we will become oriented to the battle that is going on. A few ideas for parents who want to "battle" for their children.

- Be aware of what is going on in the lives of our children. With Families busier than we have ever been, missing details of our children's lives is easy to do. What and how do you take

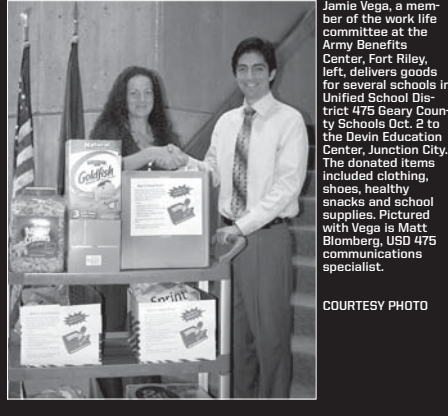
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## 'BRO' STANDS UP TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Mollie Miller | 1ST INF. DIV. Brig. Gen. Donald MacWillie, senior commander, Fort Riley, signs the Domestic Violence Prevention Month proclamation Sept. 27 at Riley's Conference Center. October is Domestic Violence Prevention Month, and the division will observe the month by conducting a variety of activities designed to educate "Big Red One" community members about domestic violence and empower them to act when they see violence in their own lives. The theme for the month is "Don't turn your back on domestic violence."

## 'HEARTY' DONATION



Jamie Vega, a member of the work life committee at the Army Benefits Center, Fort Riley, left, delivers goods for several schools in Unified School District 475 Geary County Schools Oct. 2 to the Devin Education Center, Junction City. The donated items included clothing, shoes, healthy snacks and school supplies. Pictured with Vega is Matt Blomberg, USD 475 communications specialist.

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## HOUSE FILL AD