

If We Don't Stand Up for Children...

"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much," said Marian Wright Edelman. This month, we not only celebrate the Month of the Military Child, but also we observe Child Abuse Prevention Month. As parents and caregivers we are entrusted with this most important duty to the future. This month, we remind ourselves, individually and as a community, that it is our responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect.

We are faced with uncertain times. Our Fort Bragg community is in a constant cycle of deployment. Add the stress and pressure of the economy on our budgets and on our minds and children sometimes get lost in the stresses of daily life...or worse. Statistics show that abused and neglected children are more likely to struggle in school, have self-esteem issues as teens, and abuse children as adults. As Frederick Douglass said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

Building strong children starts with building strong parents. It can be hard for parents and guardians to understand why children do what they do. Children also have trouble understanding why parents and guardians do what they do. Education is a primary building block in bridging the gap between children, adults, and the community in the prevention of child abuse.

Community education is readily available at Fort Bragg. Army Community Service proudly runs the Family Advocacy Program (FAP). FAP provides classes in the care of children from infancy

to teens. The classes are designed to help parents understand that a child's behavior, or misbehavior, is not done out of spite. The classes teach parents how to manage stress and anger, and to communicate better with each other. They also teach the community how to recognize the signs of abuse in children to prevent more harm from coming to children. On the flip side, FAP also provides the programs for children and teens to help them understand their parent's or guardian's behavior and, in turn, develop strong self-esteem and confidence in making their own choices.

Children are the one third of our population most in need of our care and protection. There's a song called "Let them be Little," by Billy Dean. It reminds us there is great joy in watching children grow up happy and healthy. Through education, we empower ourselves and the community to stop Child Abuse and Neglect in its tracks.



A Note from the Child Advocate
The Army's stance on Family violence is that it is completely unacceptable. However, the Army also openly acknowledges the difficult operational tempo and deployment cycle. The Army understands how difficult it is for Soldiers to spend 12-15 months in a war zone, and then step across the threshold of their homes to re-assume the role of father, mother, husband, wife. Maintaining a Family and raising children under the best circumstances is a daunting task. Add lengthy deployments, PTSD and other issues into the mix and it is clearly a herculean challenge to maintain a healthy Family.
Army Community Service and the Family Advocacy Program stand ready to assist Soldiers in every facet of life. From the New Parent Support Program, which assists new and expecting parents, to teen parenting classes, FAP has classes designed to assist Army Families to stay healthy and to be Army Strong!
For assistance and a detailed resource listing call (910) 396-5521.
Scott A. Chase, Fort Bragg Child Advocate

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