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Resiliency Campus

by Heather Graham, Sentinel News Editor

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Extended combat deployments on two fronts, frequent moves and all the associated uncertainties on top of the nationwide economic crisis have stressed Soldiers and their Families.

Suicide rates and substance abuse Armywide are on the rise, and Army Families are struggling to stay together during long separations.

While the Army is working to extend dwell time and give Army Families more predictability in deployments, Fort Hood is working to prevent problems before they start.

"We spend too much time fixing Soldiers after they are broken," III Corps and Fort Hood commander Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch recently told regional leaders. "We need to fix them before they are broken."

The post is working to build stronger Soldiers and Families and make them more adaptable, more resilient.

Soon, Soldiers and their Families will have a one-stop shop that encourages fitness of the mind, body and spirit and helps build resilience.

All eyes are once again on the Great Place as the national model for resilience is preparing to open.

Fort Hood's Resiliency Campus, a city-block sized complex located at 31st Street and Battalion Avenue, is projected to be fully operational by mid-September.

All of the services and programs offered still are being fine-tuned based on feedback the general has received from Soldiers and Family members.

"We will take the best of what we like that's out there and make it fit here," Col. Bill Rabena, commandant, Fort Hood Resiliency Campus, said.

Those asked for their input told Lynch and leaders they wanted the campus to be unlike anything else.

"We were told 'make it different'," Rabena said about feedback received by Fort Hood youth during a recent Youth Summit.

The campus is Family-friendly and flexible, not one size fits all, Rabena said

All of the offerings can be taken singularly or together, but everything is available in a centralized location.

"It's a Family program," Rabena said. "A lot of the stress is on the Family."

Most importantly, the Resiliency Campus is something never before seen at Fort Hood or the Army and incorporates Lynch's Family first mentality.

Lynch's vision is putting a cutting-edge Army resiliency concept into action, Rabena said.

It is a proactive step to solving the many challenges faced by Army Families.

"Don't wait until (problems) happen," Rabena said. "(We need to) build resilience before it happens."

The campus can build resiliency before deployments, and for Families, during deployments.

"Soldiers and Families don't have to wait until after a deployment," Rabena said.

Spiritual Fitness

Some of the facilities and services such as the Spiritual Fitness Center and Wellness Center are staffed and open. Others will open as they are completed.

The Spiritual Fitness Center, formerly the 33rd Street Chapel, is a non-denominational place for Soldiers and Families to meditate and refresh their spirituality. Modular meeting and classroom spaces as well as a coffee shop offering free tea and coffee provide flexibility for individual and group explorations of beliefs and classes such as Battlefield Ethics and Battlemind Training.

Chaplains and chaplain assistants are available at the center for those who would like to meet with them.

The Spiritual Fitness Center is one part of the campus Lynch would like to have open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Rabena said.

Wellness

At the Wellness Center, Soldiers and Family members can take financial classes, obtain Army Emergency Relief loans, meet with Military Family Life Consultants, take tobacco cessation and substance abuse classes and meet with nutrition experts.

Many of the programs at the Wellness Center are operational now.

Military Family Life Consultants area already in place at the Wellness Center and have been seeing clients. The services there are anonymous and no records are kept, Diane Ross, chief, Soldier and Family Readiness Branch, Army Community Services, said.

Consultants are licensed counselors who provide short-term counseling and referral services to Army Families.

Two of the consultants are at the Wellness Center, but eventually eight will operate out of the center, Ross said.

A financial management office at the center offers financial counseling and classes, AER loans and credit services.

At the Wellness Center, Soldiers and Families can take classes for tobacco cessation and substance abuse and get nutritional advice from experts who have relocated from Carl R. Darnall Army Medical

Center.

Biometric diagnostics, testing and training, which measure the way the mind and body work together, can help Soldiers and Family members with life skills such as goal setting, team building, attention control and energy management.

Known as the Army Center for Enhanced Performance, the program uses biofeedback, simulated scenarios, computer activities and fitness equipment to train minds and bodies to deal with the required level of activity, Jim Rusch, ACEP, said. ACEP can be useful for Soldiers and civilians, and adults and children.

"This applies to everything in life," Rusch said. "These are life skills."

The program also bridges mind and body fitness, a key component to the campus where the triad of fitness – mind, body and spirit – creates strong Soldiers and Families.

At the former Raider Gym, Soldiers and Families can work on their physical fitness by taking Tai Chi or yoga, climbing a rock wall or suspended ropes, or playing Wii video games in a designated room.

The gym also will offer a juice bar, massage therapy and on-site child care.

In addition to the Wii gaming room, youth will have their own scaled-down rock-climbing wall and a children's park, some suggestions garnered from the Youth Summit.

There still is more to come at the Resiliency Campus.

Future plans include a reflective pool behind the Spiritual Fitness Center, an outdoor track with an obstacle course and the addition of CrossFit, a core exercise program the Army has recently started using.

With cutting-edge technologies and the right people in place, the Resiliency Campus will continue to grow and set the standard for Army resilience.

The Army is not broken, but Lynch worries about the strains put on Army Families.

It is the Families that hold the Army together, the commander has often said.

"(Lynch) is really focused on not breaking Families," Rabena said. "This is a place for Soldiers and Families to get more help."

With the Resiliency Campus, Lynch hopes to empower Army Families and better equip them to handle the many stresses associated with today's expeditionary Army.