

Family Programs delivers support to military families through Yellow Ribbon

Samantha, age 5, daughter of Sgt. Timmoty Garrigus plays dress up during a pre-deployment Yellow Ribbon event held at Knoxville, Tenn.

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“When our dad leaves, our Family gets closer together... we find time to talk.”

— Taylor Boes

“I know how hard deployments are; when my father deployed we didn’t have good communication,” said David Tyree, 19. David’s experience isn’t unique among military Families.

The Army’s Yellow Ribbon Program was designed, in part, to help Family members like David cope with deployments. Now, David volunteers to help others during Yellow Ribbon events like the one held March 19, 2011 at the Knoxville Convention Center for the Families of the 489th Civil Affairs Battalion which is deploying in the coming months to Afghanistan.

Supported by the Family Programs section of the United States Army Civil Affairs &

Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) the pre-mobilization Yellow Ribbon event was for Soldiers and their Families to learn about the resources available to them in order to sustain a healthy Family during a mobilization.

While Soldiers and their spouses attended informational classes, children of the Soldiers were put in groups based on age. Within these groups, children had the opportunity to bond with others who will also experience having a deployed parent.

For some children, like Taylor Boes, 14, and her sister Morgan, 13, this is not the first time their father,

Maj. Ken Boes, has deployed. It has been approximately four years since his last deployment but they said they know what to expect.

“When our dad leaves, our Family gets closer together, we find time to talk,” said Taylor. This is the first time the event was made available to the Boes Family. “We are thankful for this event because we met other kids we can be friends with; they are experiencing the same things we are.”

The sisters shared tears and advice with other teens throughout the day. They claim that the one thing they may do differently this time, is their form of communication

with their father. “The last time our dad deployed we thought Skype didn’t work, but when he got home, we realized we never took the sticker off of the webcam,” Morgan laughs. “So this time, we will make sure it works before he leaves.”

The USACAPOC (A) Yellow Ribbon events are made possible by the strong Family Programs team and the help of several passionate volunteers. Lori Hawkins and her son, David Tyree, volunteer their weekends to travel to Yellow Ribbon events. Lori, a military spouse, knows what it is like to go through a deployment without a USACAPOC(A) Yellow Ribbon event; she felt very lost during her husband’s deployment. She explains that as an Army Reserve Family, most do not have access to resources that the active component have, nor do they know where to find them. “I am not an expert, I am here to share my story and to tell the Families that these are the resources available and this is how to find them,” said Lori. “When I go to these Yellow Ribbon events, it gives me the opportunity to give to the Families what I didn’t have.”

“I started as a child in the program, and then I became a volunteer with the program,” said David. “I know how hard deployments are; when my father deployed we didn’t have good communication- I went through emotions of anger, I took on more responsibilities without him there.”

David held youth group discussions throughout the Yellow Ribbon event on topics such as “Healthy ways of dealing with emotions.”

I volunteer because I want to help other children...I want them to be able to talk to someone who has ‘been there,’ and help them through

it.” He has accepted an assignment to attend the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs but will continue to volunteer when possible.

USACAPOC (A) Family Programs began supporting Yellow Ribbon events in 2009. They participate in four events prior to and during a mobilization. Events one and two, held prior to the mobilization, are available to both the Soldier and their Families, whereas, events three and four are held specifically for the Families while their Soldier is mobilized. When the Soldier returns, there are three more events that are part of the U.S. Department of Defense Reintegration Program which assist with the transition back home.

All travel expenses are paid by the organization, in order to provide this opportunity to the Soldier and their Family free of any cost.

“The pre-mobilization Yellow Ribbon event is broken down into three categories; for married couples, single Soldiers, and those deploying for their first time,” said Claudia Arceo, USACAPOC(A)’s Community Outreach Assistant. Each group is given relevant information on topics such as financial preparation, emotional health, household support and deployment. The American Red Cross, Military One Source, Legal and the unit Family Readiness Group are some of the vendors that were on hand to provide Soldiers and their Families with valuable information, advice and referrals.

For Soldiers such as Pfc. Joshua Wical, and his wife Amanda, a first deployment leaves many uncertainties. “It was helpful to receive a class on ‘What to expect emotionally,’ which focused on the stages of withdrawal,” said Amanda. She also said the Yellow Ribbon event gave her an opportunity to exchange contact information with other Families within the unit. “I look forward to making connections and friendships with other Families who are experiencing the same thing.”

USACAPOC(A) Yellow Ribbon events will continue for every Soldier and unit who will be mobilizing three months or longer. To find more information on USACAPOC(A) Yellow Ribbon events, visit

www.usacapoc.army.mil/yellowribbon.html



Sgt. Danielle Breitbard and her father Barry, share a moment during the pre-deployment event in Knoxville.