

# Your Well-Being Information Resource

## Well-Being Liaison Office (WBLO)



# FLO Notes



***A Family Like No Other – Providing For A Relevant And Ready Army***

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## WBLO Chief's Corner

### Customer service, you

Most all of you know the Well-Being Liaison Office operates the Army Information Line – **1-800-833-6622**. And, many of the calls we receive through the Army Information Line have to do specifically with customer service in one way or another.

Normally, when we receive a call it means that the caller either received an unfavorable comment or a level of service, from the Army agency they were dealing with, that did not meet the customer's expectation.

From our point of view the customer is most always right. The solution is normally easy, and once the right person to resolve the issue is found it's not long before a successful resolution for the customer is achieved.

Why should we have to go through this kind of stress in the first place?

This begs the question, what level of service should the average Soldier, family member or civilian expect?

My opinion is the answer should be excellent. At a minimum we should be faced with a person on the other side of the counter that is cheerful, pleasant, eager to help ... and generally happy to see you. Excellent service can sometimes mean a little hard work for an agency, if done right.

The other day I took off work to go to one of our ID Card Facilities and get an ID Card for my wife. She also works so we made an adventure of the event.

We were greeted by the person charged with the responsibility to provide for our need with a terse "do you have an appointment?" I replied with a polite "No."

"Well," she said, "you know you are required to have an appointment to get an ID Card."

We must have looked lost or pitiful because the sergeant told us she would take care of us anyway. We were the only customers and it was obvious we had made a major mistake. We had obviously taken the wrong day off.

How nice it would have been if we had been greeted by someone who was happy to see us! This happens all the time and unfortunately overshadows those who really try hard and truly care about giving excellent service.

It is not enough to be proficient at your job in today's Army. It is also not enough to be technically knowledgeable.

Our business is not like a department store, where you can walk in and buy an item. If you don't like the item you just take it back and get a refund. You also have a choice on where to shop, so if you are not treated properly you can go to the next store down the street.

In the Army there is normally one housing office, one ACS, one transportation office, one PX, the list goes on.

We buy service with our sacrifice and time away from family and friends. Our civilians and families buy service with their commitment to our Soldiers and the mission.

Therefore, the level of service we receive should reflect the level of dedication each Soldier has to their country.

### FirstGov features wealth of military resources

Whether you're active or retired, FirstGov – [www.FirstGov.gov](http://www.FirstGov.gov) – has arranged a section with all the resources you need.

From news about current military operations to information on the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), this section has it all.

The site features information on benefits and retirement, family support, housing, training, education, and much more.

For veterans, FirstGov.gov has organized a variety of useful topics, such as pension and health benefits, home loans, and life insurance in one easy to find place.

Find out more by going to FirstGov.gov Web site and click on the "Military and Veterans" link under the "By Audience" section.

### Commissaries celebrate 138th anniversary

The Defense Commissary Agency will mark its 14th anniversary Oct. 1, but commissaries have been operating considerably longer than that. It was 138 years ago – on July 1, 1867 to be exact – that every Army post in the United States was simultaneously authorized to begin selling grocery items from its subsistence warehouse "at cost" to soldiers of all ranks. This provided considerable savings compared to goods they could purchase from civilian merchants known as post traders. That was the start of what is now the oldest resale activity on U.S. military installations: the military gro-

cery store, originally called the sales commissary but known today simply as the commissary.

Many Army outposts did not immediately have fully-functioning commissaries. In those areas post traders continued to sell goods out of necessity but as commissaries spread, post traders were phased out of business by 1895.

Subsequently, the Navy and Marine Corps opened their first commissaries in 1910, and the Air Force did so in 1948. Over the last 138 years, the stores have operated at nearly 1,000 different locations throughout the world. Today DeCA runs 270 stores worldwide, providing a premier commissary benefit to active duty military personnel, military retirees, members of the National Guard and reserve, and their families.

## Combat-Related Special Compensation

The Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) is a \$22 billion program that provides tax-free monthly payments to disabled retirees of all uniformed services. CRSC payments are retroactive (to June 2003 or January 2004 depending on eligibility), supplement a servicemembers' Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability pay, and service retired pay.

*Eligible applicants* include retirees who served 20 or more years on active duty, or as a reservist, age 60 with a minimum of 20 creditable years (per 10 USC 12731); are in a retired status; are entitled to retired pay that is offset by VA payments (a VA Waiver); and have at least a 10-percent VA disability rating.

*Combat related criteria include* those VA disabilities that occurred under the following situations:

1. In the performance of duty under conditions simulating war (e.g. exercises, field training);
  2. While engaged in hazardous service (e.g. flight, diving, parachute duty);
  3. Through an instrumentality of war (e.g. combat vehicles, weapons, Agent Orange);
- OR
4. As a direct result of armed con-

flict (i.e. Purple Heart).

Eligible retirees should apply today. For more information or to receive an application, call CRSC toll free at 1-866-281-3254 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. Retirees can also find CRSC information and resources on the Internet at [www.crsc.army.mil](http://www.crsc.army.mil).



## USAR goes hi-tech to reach out to families

The U.S. Army Reserve unveiled a new Web portal to support deployed Soldiers and their families June 15. The U.S Army Reserve Family Programs Portal – [www.arfp.org](http://www.arfp.org) – is a “one-stop shop” that provides USAR families with information and services and enhances communications between Soldiers, their families and USAR staff.

There are more than 1 million Army Reserve Soldiers ready to support their active-duty counterparts and serve the nation when called upon by the President. Currently The Army Reserve has nearly 62,000 Soldiers deployed worldwide.

The US Army Reserve Family Programs staff currently provides vital information and services to Army Reserve Soldiers and their families. The U.S Army Reserve Family Programs Portal, developed by DefenseWeb Technologies of San Diego, replicates this physical family support system in a readily accessible virtual environment.

“Army Reserve Soldiers, unlike active-duty troops, are not centrally located on a base,” said Michael Evans, USAR family programs manager. “Since Soldiers are widely dispersed across cities, towns and villages in virtually every state, communicating with them can be more of a challenge. This new Web portal allows USAR staff to quickly and effectively communicate with Soldiers and their families. The new Web portal provides

Soldiers and their families with easy access to information and services to support their Well-Being.”

The USAR Family Programs Web Portal provides information and services to:

- **Army Reserve Soldiers (deployed and stateside)** – the latest Army Reserve news and information, links to family services and updates on Family Programs, as well as interactive online resources.

- **Families** – information on the various programs and services available to help family members adjust to change, deal with challenges related to mobilization, deployment and every day living.

- **Employers** – information to help civilian employers support their citizen-Soldier employees.

- **Family Programs staff** – a readily accessible resource for effectively delivering, tracking and reporting the status of Family Programs services provided to soldiers and their families.

For more information about the U.S. Army Reserve, visit [www4.army.mil/USAR/home/index.php](http://www4.army.mil/USAR/home/index.php).

## Survey seeks input on educating military children

The education of military children is a huge concern for the military community. From maintaining on-post schools to involvement in the local community schools, military families are concerned about the quality of education of their children.

Military children face very unique challenges, from the high school teens who are required to take additional testing and classes for graduation requirements for, yet again, another state due to a PCS move to parents' need for information about the schools in the area for a new school-aged child.

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) is soliciting information on the children's educational needs of military families and wants to hear about your family's experience in ensuring that the educational needs of children are met. To participate in NMFA's military children education survey, log on to

[www.nmfa.org/surveys](http://www.nmfa.org/surveys) and take part in the “Your Child’s Education” survey.

## Tips for PCSing

The summer months are here, so too is the high-volume PCS (permanent change of station) season.

If you are PCSing outside the continental United States (OCONUS), or to a remote location with family members, here are a few tips from Community Health Nursing (CHN) to make your family-member OCONUS screening hassle-free:

1. To prevent travel delays, family-member screening appointments should be scheduled upon receipt of appropriate military OCONUS travel screening forms.

2. Bring all family member medical and immunization records to the appointment.

3. Ensure family members have current and complete medical information. Children up to age 2 must have an up-to-date Well Baby visit documented in their medical records. Children 3-17 and adults must have documentation of a physical exam within the last year. (Appointments with CHN can be before your physical exam appointment with your primary-care manager.)

4. Be aware that any outstanding tests or consultations ordered by the provider must be completed prior to the final medical clearance (for example, if the provider ordered a cardiology consultation, it must be completed and the results documented in the family member’s medical record).

5. Bring a copy of the current Individualized Education Program or Individualized Family Services Plan for any family members receiving special-education or early-intervention services.

6. Bring all family members 6 years old or younger to the appointment.

**Editor’s note:** This story was written by Carla Benjamin who is a community health nurse at the Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center at Fort Meade, Md.

## Beware of hoaxes

The wife of a Fort Carson, Colo., Soldier, who is deployed in Iraq, received a hoax telephone call.

Reportedly, a man claiming to be a colonel called the wife to say something happened to her husband, but the call proved to be a fake.

This call has been at least the second such reported hoax perpetrated on the spouses of Fort Carson Soldiers, Army officials said.

## Scholarships for Military Children

Thanks to the Scholarships for Military Children program 500 students will receive \$1,500 scholarships to apply toward college tuition this fall.



Eligibility includes sons and daughters of active-duty, National Guard and reserve Soldiers, as well as those of retired servicemembers. The annual scholarship program is usually announced in early November with an entry deadline of mid-February.

## Soldier, family life consultant initiative begins

Following the success of an Office of the Secretary of Defense pilot program in the United States Army Europe, the Department of the Army “Soldier and Family Life Consultants Initiative” began in June.

The program provides informal support to Soldiers and their family members, offering free, anonymous reunion and reintegration support to active-duty Soldiers, National Guardsmen, reservists and their families.

For more information on this program, contact Carol Menichetti via e-

mail at [Carol.Menichetti@us.army.mil](mailto:Carol.Menichetti@us.army.mil), or by phone at (703) 681-1545.

## Spouses to Teachers program unveiled

Spouses to Teachers, which was developed from a program to help servicemembers become teachers, is helping military spouses already working as teachers to get certified in a different state.

The program offers several forms of assistance and financial help up to \$600 per person for testing and certification costs.

For more information, visit the Spouse to Teachers Web site – [www.spousestoteachers.com](http://www.spousestoteachers.com).

## Military Spouse Career Center

The Military Spouse Career Center, commissioned by the Department of Defense Office of Military Community and Family Policy, launched in April, and can be accessed on the Internet at [www.Military.com/spouse](http://www.Military.com/spouse).

The new resource connects America’s 1 million military spouses with education options, scholarships, training programs, career planning tips and employment opportunities.

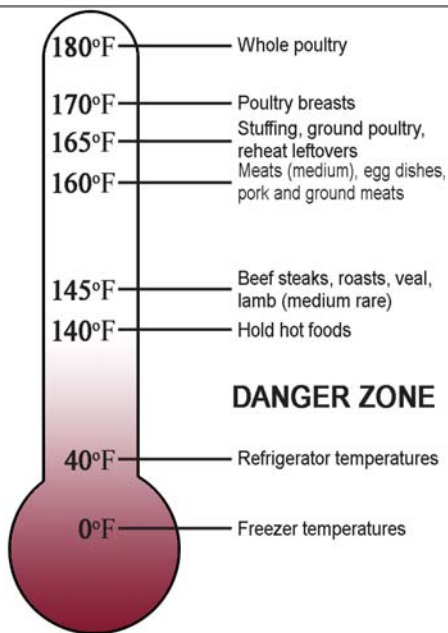
For more information, visit: [www.Military.com/spouse](http://www.Military.com/spouse).

## Hot weather food safety tips

No matter where you’re stationed, it’s a pretty good bet your weather is about as hot as a firecracker by now. It’s the time of year for lazy days at the beach or pool, complete with a picnic basket of goodies, or backyard cookouts with friends and family. If you’d rather not be remembered as the host who had to serve “Alka-Seltzer” cocktails a couple of hours after the hamburgers and hot dogs, then it’s a good time to review food safety basics.

Knowing how to prepare, handle and

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Play it safe with food. Know how to prepare, handle and store food safely to keep you and your family safe:

- Clean hands, food-contact surfaces, fruits and vegetables. To avoid spreading bacteria to other foods, meat and poultry should not be washed or rinsed. Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing or storing.
- Cook meat, poultry and fish to safe internal temperatures to kill microorganisms.
- Chill perishable foods promptly and thaw foods properly.

**Source:** Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, Finding Your Way to a Healthier You.

store food properly is always important, but summer temperatures kick spoilage actions into high gear. Normally the rule of thumb for safely allowing foods to remain at room temperature while the meal is being served and consumed is two hours. At temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit it's only one hour. That's why it's important to know summer food safety rules and apply them properly.

**Keep it clean** – Wash hands with soap and water often while handling food, and do the same for surfaces food will come into contact with. On a picnic, take along paper towels and hand sanitizer. Don't forget to give fresh fruits and vegetables a bath, too. Do it just before you're ready to use them, and don't use soap. Just rinse them good under cold running water, scrubbing briskly with your hands or a soft brush, then dry well with paper towels. Even produce such as cantaloupe and watermelon – with a rind that you don't intend to eat – need this same washing routine to prevent harmful organisms from contaminating the

fruit's flesh when sliced open.

**Separate so you don't contaminate**

– This caution starts at the commissary and carries through to refrigerator storage, packing a cooler, and even cooking and serving. Always keep raw meat, poultry and seafood, and their leaking juices away from cooked, ready-to-eat foods and fresh produce. Before handling other foods, use soap and water to wash hands, utensils and cutting boards that have come into contact with raw meats. Never put cooked meats back on the same plate that held them raw. If raw meats, poultry or seafood must share space in a cooler with other foods, carefully pack each in sealed, leak-proof containers.

**Chill perishable foods promptly and thaw foods properly**

– Nothing provides a better environment for the quick growth of germs than the thawing of foods on the kitchen counter at room temperature. Thaw foods in the refrigerator, allowing 24 hours for each five pounds of frozen food to be thawed. For quick thawing, submerge foods wrapped in airtight packaging in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Thaw foods in the microwave only if you'll be cooking them immediately.

Refrigerate perishable foods immediately upon returning home from the commissary, placing raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf to eliminate the possibility of accidental drips that can contaminate other foods.

**Cook it safe, test the temperature**

– If you're not in the habit of using a meat thermometer to verify that items like hamburgers, pork chops or chicken breasts have reached a safe internal temperature, please, do yourself and your family a favor by changing that bad habit. Even though the accepted advice is to "cook ground beef patties until the center is no longer pink," judging when food is done based on color alone has proven to be unreliable. A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture study found that one out of every four hamburgers turns brown in the center *before* it reaches a safe internal temperature. If you're a fan of rare hamburgers, be aware that you are taking a calculated risk every time you eat one.

Why is it okay to eat a medium rare steak, but not a medium rare hamburg-

er? Harmful bacteria typically reside on the surface of a whole piece of meat like a steak. The high temperature and amount of time required to brown the steak's exterior will kill the surface bacteria and sufficiently warm the center to a safe level. With ground meats, surface bacteria get dispersed throughout the product in grinding.

Check the accompanying chart for the safe internal temperature for steaks, roasts, poultry, ground meats and egg dishes. Then break out that meat thermometer and make temperature-taking a regular habit.

*Editor's note: This article was written by DeCA Europe consumer advocate Kay Blakley.*

## TRICARE update

TRICARE Standard beneficiaries who live within a 40-mile radius of a military medical treatment facility will no longer be required to obtain a non-availability statement or pre-authorization from an MTF before receiving inpatient care (other than mental health services) or maternity care from a civilian provider. DoD is still authorized to make exceptions under certain conditions through a waiver process.

## Well-Being Liaison Office

The Well-Being Liaison Office would like to extend a warm welcome to its two newest employees – Alicia Kadesch and Kristin Kilbane.

Alicia Kadesch is a constituent liaison serving on the Army Information Line staff. A 2004 graduate of the University of Florida, Alicia holds a BA in Political Science with a concentration on International Relations, and she proudly calls herself a military brat.

Kristin Kilbane is the new content manager for the WBLO's Army Families Online Web site. The daughter of a retired lieutenant colonel and Vietnam veteran, Kristin holds a Masters degree from the Catholic University of America, and brings with her a wealth of experience in the field of Web editing and publishing.

