

Children recognized in April during ‘Month of the Military Child’

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The “Month of the Military Child” begins April 1, 2012. This year’s theme, developed by the Army Teen Panel, is “Military Kids: Heroes for the Future.”

More than 1.7 million children have at least one parent serving in the military. An estimated 900,000 children have had one or both parents deployed multiple times over the last ten years.

“Now that troop strength in combat is being drawn down, there’s a tendency to just breathe a sigh of relief and think things will all go back to normal,” said Lisa Hamlin, Child, Youth and School Services Director at the Installation Management Command.

However, many child development and mental health experts believe military children may need support now, more than ever. Many are now dealing with a new reality; often added to their burden is adjustment to a parent who’s returned home with severe wounds, post-traumatic stress, or other medical issues.

“In many cases, the simple fact that mom or dad is now home, and the family dynamic has changed, can have a big impact in a child’s life,” Hamlin said.

Taking a moment to thank military kids for their service, and the sacrifices they’ve made during ten years of conflict, Hamlin said, is a simple way to remind everyone that as resilient as they’ve proven to be, our military children still need our support.

Garrisons around the world are developing events and celebrations designed to recognize the sacrifices military children make and the support they provide to their Soldier-parent(s) and families.

The celebrations vary on each installation based on resources, deployment status of installation units, and other factors. They can be as simple as Child Development Center events where parents are invited to share why their children are their heroes at assemblies, or as complex as a day of parades, carnivals and youth activities. In many cases, garrisons combine spring festivals or other planned events to coincide with MOMC activities.

The Month of the Military Child creates awareness of the service—and sacrifices—of our military’s children. It is an opportunity to thank children for their support to our nation’s war fighters, and recognize the important role they play in the strength of our nation by contributing to the strength of the Army Family.

The Army recognizes and appreciates the sacrifices our children make daily, and is committed to maintaining excellence in schools, youth services and childcare to support our children and their families.

(Editor's Note: Additional information about the MOMC activities at Fort Lee will appear in the March 29 edition of the Fort Lee Traveller.)