

New social media platform helps military members

Jamie Findlater, Special to American Forces Press Service

New social media platform helps military members with relocation

WASHINGTON, Dec. 3, 2008 - From a civilian perspective, it may be hard to understand the challenge of constant relocation that comes with military service. Finding new schools, identifying new organizations to join and tracking down a safe neighborhood can be an overwhelming process. As a result, many military families turn to others in the military community for information and resources.

"What one person doesn't know, someone else usually does," retired Army Col. Dale Kissinger said. "The problem is finding that person."

Kissinger is co-founder of MilitaryAvenue.com, a military-oriented Web site that offers moving, travel and lifestyle services and discounts. The site recently launched a new online platform for relocation information exchange.

"MilitaryAvenue Answers" is a community-based question and answer platform that allows the military community to seek information and assistance directly from other military members, the local base community and industry experts.

To access the online forum, visitors can go to www.militaryavenue.com/answers, type in a question and get answers from a variety of sources. The forum is organized so users can either ask general questions such as "What moving company offers a military discount?" or more specific area-based questions such as "What is the best pizza place near Fort Bliss?"

Once a question is asked, it is forwarded to a stable of volunteer experts and posted online so anyone with relevant information can respond.

"The platform allows for multiple responses to help ensure a well-rounded answer for each question," Dan Kissinger, the company's chief executive officer, said. "All information will be permanently catalogued and available to assist other military members with similar questions and concerns."

The new tool empowers members of the military community to help one another by tapping into

others' individual knowledge and experience, he added.

"MilitaryAvenue.com began as a way to disseminate information about local base communities and the military life to its highly mobile members," the CEO said. "MilitaryAvenue Answers is empowering those members to disseminate their own information."

Dan Kissinger said he hopes the platform will be a useful resource not only for military members and their families, but also for military "outsiders" interested in better understanding the life and sacrifices made by military families or who may have access to additional information and resources.

The interactive nature of the site is geared to assist younger military families who have grown up with the Internet and rely on community forums like this regularly for information exchange, Dan Kissinger said. "With this flexible and easily updated platform, MilitaryAvenue.com is providing a much-needed resource for younger military members accustomed to seeking information from social media communities," he explained.

Looking forward, he said he is hopeful that this tool will set a precedent in how military members access and share information with one another.

"The goal is to move the entire site toward an exchange of information, rather than the display of information," he said. "There needs to be more than a one-way conversation."