

FLAGS creates leaders for life

Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs

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20 Facilitating Leadership and Group Skills facilitators completed their training and celebrated with a graduation ceremony Nov. 30. These new leaders will now train other spouses during FLAGS workshops in January. FLAGS, offered at the USAWC since 1992, is a volunteer-based to help senior military spouses become strategic thinkers and problem solvers. Photo by Megan Clugh.

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Nov. 30, 2011 – Life-changing educational programs and personal growth are not just available for the military officers going through the various educational programs at the Army War College, there are opportunities for spouses and family members as well.

For the last few weeks, spouses of USAWC students have been taking part in the Facilitating Leadership and Group Skills training seminar facilitator training. The 20-member class celebrated with a graduation ceremony in the LVCC Nov. 30.

“This is a unique program specific to the Army War College, but it is not just a military spouse training workshop,” explained Lisa Towery, who has been the program director since 2007. “It provides the opportunity for more effective leadership abilities and skills in the roles that they may take on in the future.”

Col. Bobby Towery, deputy commandant, compared the program to the Airborne school in the Army during their ceremony.

“You facilitators are now the ‘jumpmasters’ for this FLAGS program,” he said. “You will now help guide and train the next generation of senior spouse leaders. We need you to pass on your knowledge.”

FLAGS, offered at the USAWC since 1992, is a volunteer-based to help senior military spouses become strategic thinkers and problem solvers, but the spouses who have been training for a facilitator spot say the program offers much more.

“I think the FLAGS program was a great opportunity not only to learn a great deal about myself, but also about the groups I interact with and how to be more effective,” said Sheri Fisher. “This type of information for me is perfect. I’m a life coach, so I spend a great deal of time interacting with people, so understanding myself and different perspectives is invaluable.”

“As a professional I wanted to sink my teeth into something and hone the skills I have and develop some new ones,” said Jennifer Eyre. “The self-knowledge I’ve gained and the skills I’ve acquired I can immediately use in my marriage and my family. As a teacher I can also use them in a group setting, no matter what the audience is.”

This year’s class of 20 is the largest in the programs history according to Christine Yuengert, Military Family Program Coordinator.

“The setting is an experiential learning workshop and provides the opportunity for self-awareness and validation with further opportunities to learn more from those who are in the group,” said Towery. “Everyone learns group dynamics through the group experience and they learn a lot from what is presented, but they ultimately learn more through each other.”

Towery explained that facilitators first learn about the individual and self-awareness which lends itself to understanding how individuals, when grouped, understand a given situation or information presented.

“They learn about the individual first and about whom they are as individuals and then they shift into a group setting, focusing on communication, assumptions, first impressions and our need for inclusion, our ability to choose a leadership style and ability to identify audiences,” she said. “These skills are applicable to any setting within a group, managing groups or resolving conflict with people.”

“The ability to learn more about who you are and what your strengths are is really an eye opening experience,” said Cassie Gonzales. “This has really helped me see how applicable the skills we learn here are to almost any situation.”

“I have heard from other spouses who have taken part in the program that this is a great opportunity for personal and professional growth,” said Patti Eassa. “It really helped clarify for me what I want to do and how I can best use my strengths.”

“What is so beneficial is that this is not just a military program, it allows for growth within your family,

within yourself, and in your career,” said Sherry Eifler.

“One of the most valuable parts of the program for me was the *Myers-Briggs* Type Indicator,” said Amy Dunleavy. “I tend to be quiet, but have learned that I’m moving towards that midline of being an extravert through all of my experience with the military. I’m becoming more comfortable in participating and leading groups because of that.”

The training occurs through the use of video, small group and large group activities, personal reflection, partnerships and other multiple venues that provide insight into how strong leaders develop their skills.

The first week of FLAGS seminars will be offered the week of Jan 27. A second FLAGS session will be offered the week of Feb. 27.

FLAGS is open to all spouses of the Army War College, both student and faculty or staff, and consideration is given as well for attendance to USAWC staff employees based on space availability.

“FLAGS is a good fit for anyone who has a desire to be a more effective group member, both in groups currently affiliated with, as well as those [he or she may be] affiliated with in the future,” said Towery.

The new facilitators are:

Kris Bailes

Heidi Baine

Sylvia Bennett

Patti Bentley

Ann Dunleavy

Patti Eassa

Sherry Eifler

Jennifer Eyre

Sheri Fisher

Heather Flores

Maryellen Forsyth

Cassie Gonzales

Christy Grubbs

Rachel Halford

Stephanie Kauzlarich

Lela Magee

Evelyn Pannell

Michelle Peavie

Tanya Rowell

Jeanette Swanson

For more information on how to sign up for FLAGS, contact Christine Yuengert at carl_mfp_coordinator@conus.army.mil or by phone at 245-4787.

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