

Volunteering to Make a Difference

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Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos, USAWC Public Affairs

In his book, “A Sense of Honor,” Virginia Senator James Webb poses the question, “How big are you? Are you bigger than yourself?”

The men and women, who volunteer their time at Carlisle Barracks know the answer to this question, they are bigger than themselves.

“Volunteers make a difference wherever they provide support and assistance and they do it because they want to make a difference and be a part of something bigger than themselves,” said Lt. Col. William McDonough, Carlisle Barracks Garrison Commander.

Volunteering is so important here that the garrison commander posed a more important question.

Linda Slaughter, Army Community Services director, agrees.

“Volunteers make a difference,” she said. “They bring skills and new ideas to our organizations. They add value to our organizations by being here.”

One of the advantages of living and working at Carlisle Barracks is that there is time to dedicate to volunteering, as well as ample opportunities to suit any interest, she said.

“Some volunteers find ways to remain professionally involved while they are here, others volunteer to bond with their children, while others see volunteering as a way to give back to the community,” said Slaughter.

Norricia Speights, spouse volunteer

“Volunteering helps me stay connected both personally and professionally,” said Norricia Speights, who has volunteered with the Carlisle Barracks Army Community Services for about a year and a half.

“We get a lot of student spouses that volunteer while they are here as a way to continue to build on their career skills,” said Slaughter.

Speights came to Carlisle in the summer of 2010 with her husband, Col. Elmer Speights, a member of the Army War College class of 2011. Speights stayed in Carlisle after graduation due to her husband's post-graduation deployment.

Speights a substance abuse counselor by training, began volunteering at ACS as a way to stay busy and remain professionally involved.

"I help out wherever they need me to," said Speights. "I have done everything from man the ACS front desk, help with the job fair and assist with the new student orientation for the War College."

As a volunteer Speights has also served as a spouse representative on the Commissary/Exchange advisor board and helped out with the Carlisle Barracks EEO.

One of the things Speights likes about volunteering here is that she can tailor it to fit her schedule and her interests.

"I can volunteer as much or as little as I want to, and there are multiple venues here where you can volunteer."

Like many Army volunteers Speights has volunteered at other installations.

"Where ever I go I always try to encourage people to volunteer. The Army has given a lot to our family, so being able to give back is good. I believe in the paying it back system."

Lt. Col. Scott Grant, faculty volunteer

Grant, an operations research analyst at the Center for Strategic Leadership, has coached youth basketball and soccer for the past seven years.

"I had played basketball as a child, but had never played soccer," said Grant. "However the Youth Sports Offices have been great in helping me not only learn the games but stay ahead of the kids."

Grant, who has coached children age five to 11, started coaching when his children, Jackson and Rebekah started playing youth sports.

"I wanted my kids to be involved in sports," said Grant. "Coaching gave me the opportunity to not only provide them with the opportunity to learn a sport and practice good sportsmanship in a safe environment, but it is also fun."

Initially Grant coached children age five to seven.

“At that age they just follow the ball around the court or field, but by the time they are eight or nine years old you can see that they are beginning to play as a team and develop strategy, so the games are much more exciting,” said Grant.

“What I enjoy most about coaching kids is seeing them develop as players over the season. Every year I get kids who have never played, and know nothing about the game, but they learn the sport and develop as a player.

One of the things that Grant likes about being stationed at Carlisle Barracks is that he has a predictable schedule, which allows him to commit time to coaching.

Grant encourages everyone to get involved in coaching youth sports, especially if they have children.

“It takes patients, especially with the younger children, but the rewards are worth it,” he said. “Besides it is fun.”

Air Force Lt. Col. Charles Douglass, student volunteer

Lt. Col. Charles Douglass, a member of the Army War College class of 2012, has served as a volunteer assistant Boy Scout master for the past six years. So when he came to Carlisle Barracks this summer to begin his studies as an Army War College student, it was natural for him to call Col. Bob Hoelscher, the scout leader for Troop 173, and offer his services.

“I started volunteering when my boys started in scouts,” said Douglass. “Not only is it a hobby, but it allows me to spend time with them. Being in the military I frequently work long hours, deploy, or have to go TDY, scouting helps me block off time to spend with them.” Douglass’ sons, Joseph, 13 and Sean, 12, have both been active in scouting since they were in 1st grade.

“Many people think that volunteering is going to be incredibly time consuming, but it is not,” said Douglass. “You can devote as much or as little time as you want. At the beginning of the year Col. Bob Hoelscher sits down with the assistant scout masters and each one picks one event a year to lead.

“My event was designing a development program to help the boys qualify for three of the required 12 Eagle Scout merit badges,” Douglass said. “The three merit badges were family life, personal fitness and financial management, and they take about 12 weeks to complete because the boys have to keep track of their physical fitness and personal finances as well as learn about stocks and CDs.

“To kick off the event I organized a four day development program with speakers from around the

community. I tried to package it where there is a higher purpose than getting a piece of cloth out of it,” he said. “These merit badges traditionally hang scouts up because they are time consuming and it is difficult to get a 13 year old excited about money management.”

“There are two kinds of volunteers,” said Douglass. “There are the ones that jump right in, the self-recruiters, and there are those who initially agree to help out with one thing and then they realize how much fun it is, and see the non-tangible rewards, and then they return.”

Staff Sgt. Radouane Moukraj, Soldier volunteer

“Staff Sgt. Moukraj has been a part of every event that I have taken Soldiers too,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Blakey, Carlisle Barracks Garrison Sergeant Major. “He has volunteered his time to help move the Thrift Shop to its current location, helped paint the TIKI Bar, he assisted in policing the post after last summer’s storm. He has also been an asset at all BOSS events, car washes, cookouts, not to mention helping me represent the installation at Project Share.”

Along with being an active volunteer within Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Moukraj has also volunteered as a combatives instructor at Jim Thorpe Gym, as well as assisting in teaching other physical fitness classes.

“I volunteer to show gratitude to the Army and Carlisle Barracks,” said Moukraj. “It is always good to help others. When people help the task is easier because things can be done more efficiently and easier.”

Moukraj enjoys volunteering because it is a way to learn new skills and spend time with new and old friends.

“When you volunteer yourself confidence increases because you are breaking out of your comfort zone and learning a new skill. This gives you a sense of accomplishment and is emotionally uplifting.”

Like many volunteers Moukraj has volunteered throughout his Army career. While stationed in Germany he helped an elderly couple restore their home and served as a referee during a combatives competition.

While Moukraj has volunteered in a wide variety of ways, his favorite volunteering activity is helping those in need.

“It reminds me that not everything is about money, and that there are always people who are willing to help out.”

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