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Carlisle Barracks Youth Services employees cut the ribbon for the Sgt. Andrew McConnell Youth Center with Kathy McConnell during a ceremony Sept. 12. Photo by Scott Finger.

Sept. 12, 2014 -- Carlisle Barracks officially introduced a brand new Youth Center – a terrific Army investment in our youth and

named in honor of a former member of our community – during a ceremony Sept. 12 here.

Retired **Gen. Richard Cody**, former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and **Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp**, Army War College Commandant, celebrated the new center, named to honor of Army **Sergeant Andrew McConnell**, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009.

“Andrew was an outstanding young man and Soldier, an outstanding example for the thousands of kids that will come through the doors in the next decade,” said Rapp.

“In places like the McConnell Youth Center life-long friends are made and lessons are learned,” said Cody. “After more than a decade of war, we have placed a tremendous burden on the families and the community. This facility is a re-affirmation of the Army commitment to families.”

The ceremony for the \$6 million 20,000 square foot building marks the culmination of a project that has been more than 10 years in the making. Along the way, YS youth have helped plan the features that others would enjoy, like the demonstration kitchen for cooking classes, the full-size gym with rock wall and patio. The gym will have a sport court that can be used, interchangeably, for roller-skating,

roller hockey, and basketball.

Liz Knouse, director of the post's family programs, couldn't hide her excitement that the facility had finally become a reality.

"Through the entire process I kept reassuring our staff and leadership that a new youth center was coming," she said. "It's an honor to be able to provide this top-notch facility and programs for our community and our families."

Retired Gen. Richard Cody, former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army was the keynote speaker for the unveiling of the Sgt. Andrew McConnell Youth Center at Carlisle Barracks.



During the ceremony his former battalion commander, **Col. Jeff French**, his former roommate at Ft. Bragg and best friend **Craig Maniscalco**, his father, retired **Col. Scott McConnell** and his sister, **Amelia**, shared their memories of McConnell before helping to the ribbon to mark the dedication of the center.

"Mac' was the type of man wanted to make a difference in his unit and in the world around him," said French, about Andrew. "I can think of no one who epitomizes the Army Family more than the McConnell's, so it's appropriate that we are naming this center after him."

McConnell recalled the importance of youth centers and programs to Andrew as he made move after move.

"Andrew felt at home when we moved and met kids like him, that were cut from the same cloth and had many of the same experiences," said Scott McConnell. "To have this great facility named after him is incredibly humbling."

The center, adjacent to the Moore Child Development Center, the Delaney Clubhouse and sports fields, creates a one-stop center for post youth.

"Andrew brought joy and laughter to our lives and at times was the backbone of our family," said Amelia McConnell. "When kids say now 'let's go the McConnell Center,' it will be full of joy. Everyone who enters lives will be changed.

“I wish I could be a kid again and climb the wall or enjoy the Friday night dodgeball here. I could not think of a more perfect honor than naming this center after him,” she said.

Cumberland Valley JROTC provided a color guard. The national anthem was sung by family friend Rachel Childress.

After the ceremony, guests toured the facility to learn more about the programs awaiting post youth when the center opens for operation Sept. 29.

About Sgt. Andrew McConnell



As an 'Army Brat', Andrew moved eleven times and attended seven different schools. While his father was a student at The War College Andrew was employed by the Carlisle Barracks Sports Office where he left an indelible impression.

Answering a burning desire to serve his country, Andrew enlisted in the Infantry in October 2005, when he knew the country was deeply engaged in two wars.

He arrived at Fort Lewis, Wash., as a Specialist and was assigned to 2-1 Infantry, 5-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team. In July 2009, Andrew deployed as an infantry squad leader in B Company, 2-1 Infantry to Afghanistan.

Six weeks into his deployment, while conducting an early morning, mounted patrol, his Stryker vehicle struck a roadside bomb. The blast killed Andrew and his Platoon Leader, **1st Lt. David Wright**, and wounded several members of his squad. Andrew was interred at Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent, Wash.