

# AFAP sheds light on local, Army-wide issues

*Spc. Jennifer Rick, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

## AFAP Symposium sheds light on local, Army-wide issues



***Sgt. Gregory Stovall briefs Carlisle Barracks senior leadership on issues and potential solutions to local and Army-wide issues. Commissioned and enlisted servicemembers, Department of Defense civilians, retirees, spouses, family members and teens were invited to attend the three-day, annual conference***  
*Photo by Scott Finger.*

January 26, 2009 -- When it comes to understanding the ups and downs of military life, who knows better

than the people who live it? That's why the Army has an annual event called the Army Family Action Plan, a grassroots organization which gives enlisted and commissioned servicemembers, Department of the Army and Department of Defense civilians, spouses, retirees, family members and teens an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

The Carlisle Barracks AFAP symposium was held Jan. 21-23 at the Letort View Community Center. This year, the 44 delegates at the conference were split into four topical groups: Children and Youth, Community Support/Consumer Services, Medical/Dental and Soldier Support.

Each group discussed Army-wide and local issues and concerns. After reviewing all their options, they voted on what they felt were the three most important. They then discussed and chose what they believed to be a good potential solution to the problem, captured in an Issue Paper.

Throughout the conference, subject matter experts from organizations throughout the installation were available to answer any questions, and let the delegates know if an issue is already being worked on.

At the end of the conference, a spokesperson from each group presented what they felt was working well and

their issues and recommendations to the Carlisle Barracks senior leadership.

Some issues will be resolved by the post's leadership, and others will be presented to leadership at the regional level, and if needed, will be passed to the Department of the Army level.

Maj. Gen. Robert Williams, Army War College commandant, expressed interest in the issues, and addressed the delegates, facilitators and observers.

"You all are a powerful group," he said. "No one wants to take on the Army family."

### **Delegates' most valued services**

- Medical and dental care
- Housing
- Commissary
- Child, Youth and School Services
- Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation
- Veterans' benefits
- Family Readiness Group

### **Delegates' choices for most positive aspect of Carlisle Barracks**

- Youth Services, child care
- Human Resources
- County Fair
- YS summer camp
- USAWC staff is professional
- Post housing construction

The delegates came up with a wide variety of issues and recommendations for change.

### **CYSS online registration and payment**

Currently: Parents must register their children for Child, Youth and School Services at the YS building. According to the group members, this leads to missed payments, reduces participation and contributes to parents missing time from duty.

Group Recommendation: Their proposed solution is the ability to register children online. The DFMWR reported that they are already working on an online FMWR system, which is expected to be available in the next 18-24 months.

### **PTSD testing for Soldiers returning from deployment**

Currently: All Soldiers are screened for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder when returning from theater, but delegates believed they may not be receiving enough follow-up care to be properly diagnosed and treated, if needed.

Group recommendation: Delegates want to see an Army-wide standardization of PTSD screening at intervals such as the four- and 12-month mark from returning from a deployment. Post leadership agreed and said they would make sure to pass the issue higher.

#### Military Clothing Sales on Carlisle Barracks

Currently: Servicemembers find the lack of a military clothing and sales facility on Carlisle Barracks a problem. The nearest facility is at Fort Indiantown Gap, which is an 80 mile round trip from Carlisle Barracks. Sister services must travel to Washington, D.C. to purchase military clothing items. Delegates noted that purchasing items online often resulted in delays of up to several weeks.

Group Recommendation: They would like to see a full-service facility, including items for all branches of the military, brought to Carlisle Barracks.

***Delegates at the 2009 Army Family Action Plan Conference discuss issues relating to military life. The delegates were separated into four work-groups: Children and Youth, Community Support/Consumer Services, Medical/Dental and Soldier Support. Photo by Scott Finger.***



#### **Other issues**

- Currently: The Gifted and Talented programs at schools around the country have different standards and testing. This causes a problem for military children who change schools often. Kids often have to be retested at each school, which takes time and money, and the children sometimes miss time in the program due to the need for new tests.

Group Recommendation: Parents would like to see a way for the transition to be easier for their kids, so they are getting the most out of these programs.

- Currently: Non-active duty servicemembers, Reservists and retirees are not eligible for the use of Youth Services programs.

Group Recommendation: Open the YS programs to military i.d. card holders, whether or not they are on active duty.

- Currently: The system for tracking volunteer hours is not user friendly, and results in an inaccurate measure of service.

Group Recommendation: Implementing a new system, such as scanning a card at the beginning and end of

volunteer hours for an easier way to keep track.

- Currently: Households with a family member needing special care often have problems when moving to a new installation, because specialized coverage cannot start until the family is physically at the new duty station.

Group Recommendation: Introducing a TriCare policy change so that coverage in a new region can be arranged before the family is actually in the area.

- Currently: Veterinary services are inadequate to meet the needs of this military community.

Group Recommendation: Expand the hours and services of the installation's veterinary facility.

- Currently: Many servicemembers and families are unaware of the benefits they may receive from traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

Group Recommendation: Delegates would like to see education available to families so they know what is available to them.

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 01 February 2009