



The West Point Paws for a Cause volunteer group was implemented in September 2011. This turned into a collaborative effort between the vet clinic, American Red Cross, the Warrior Transition Unit's (WTU) Occupational Therapist (OT) and the Soldier and Family Assistance Center (SFAC) Staff.

The response from the volunteers has been overwhelming with about 30 registered therapy dogs and their owners donate their time every Wednesday to spend with the Warriors in Transition (WTs). They can be found up at the Warrior Transition Unit barracks or in the SFAC. The volunteers have even started their own Facebook site to document their progress, check them out at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/West-Point-Paws-For-a-Cause/125363694232438>

According to the healthspring.net naturopathic site, studies have shown that petting animals can bring down a person's blood pressure and trigger the release of dopamine and serotonin in the brain, which can elevate mood. Not only does the West Point Paws for a Cause group assist with Warriors in Transition but also provide services to other caregivers and supporting staff. Healthspring.net says that health care workers with high-pressure jobs benefit from the proximity of therapy animals through lowered stress.



On 21 December 2011, the IMCOM Commander acknowledged the West Point Paws for a Cause Therapy Dog Group as a Best Practice during his Net Update. For additional information please contact **Amy Rodick, SFAC Supervisor at 845-938-0628.**



Thinking of purchasing a new vehicle? Here are some ideas and suggestions to help you along the way.

Several (5-6) months prior, set up an interest bearing savings account designated specifically for the purpose of purchasing a vehicle. Ideally you should go the extra length of setting up as an allotment depositing an estimated dollar amount of what the monthly payments will be. In-turn the money saved can be used as your down payment. This is a twofold opportunity, allowing you to become accustomed to living without the money which is being used for monthly payments, while attaining a larger down payment.

During the time frame you are saving for your purchase you need to be researching. On-line, in person, newspapers, which ever you prefer, now is the time to comparison shop for the best deals. Consider which the options you need in your car, some are factory installed others are added extra, which can get costly if you're not careful. Most importantly a firm decision needs to be made on the make and model of the vehicle you plan to purchase. The vehicle must last you a while, change with the economic times, and fit your family's needs and lifestyle.

Next on the road to purchasing a vehicle is a pre-approved car loan. Avoid dealer financing the interest rates are usually higher. The interest rates from your bank or credit union will more than likely always be better than a dealer. Go prepared to the dealer with a dollar figure in mind of how much you will be able to spend on the car, shop with in this price range.

- Quick tips:
- Do not reveal emotions to the dealer, excitement or necessity are definite easy sell
 - The larger the down payment the lower the monthly payments
 - Pay the loan in the shortest term possible
 - Think carefully before adding a feature you may not even use

For more information on shopping for a car or other financial tips please call **Amy Weyhrauch, Financial Readiness Program Manager at 845-938-5839.**



TO THE POINT



IMCOM
SOLDIERS · FAMILIES · CIVILIANS



ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER

622 Swift Road, West Point, NY 10996
845.938.4621/2519
DSN: 688.4621/2519
FAX: 845.938.3019
www.westpointmwr.com



Child Abuse Prevention Month April 2012

The theme of this year's campaign is "Child Abuse...It's No Secret – Everyone Can Help." The Army has a culture of personal responsibility which is demonstrated through the Army Values. The Army Values of respect and integrity lend themselves naturally to child abuse prevention: treat people as they should be treated, and do what's right, legally and morally. Kids are people too, and as adults it is our responsibility to ensure children have a safe and happy environment, home life, and interactions as they grow up. When parents have questions, Family Advocacy is here to provide a variety of assistance:

- Parenting classes** tailored to meet individual Family needs and questions.
- Wee Ones Open Play Group**, Mondays, 0930 -1100, Lee Area Child Development Center.
- Parent Resource Lending Library** at Army Community Service.
- Anger and stress management classes**, personally tailored to meet individual questions and needs.

Stop by Army Community Service during April and see the display of materials in the Common Area! For more information please call **Shelley Ariosto, Family Advocacy Program Manager, (845) 938-3369, or E Mail shelley.ariosto@us.army.mil**

Sexual Assault Awareness Month – April 2012

Sexual assault affects individuals, Families, the workplace, and the community. Women as well as men are victims. Sexual assault victims often suffer in silence brought on by fear, shame, and embarrassment. There are resources available! If you know of someone who might need help or simply a listening ear, please contact **Dan Toohey, Installation Victim Advocate, (845) 938-5657, or Shelley Ariosto, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, (845) 938-3369.** Stop by Army Community Service during April to see the display of materials in the Common Area!

MEET YOUR ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE STAFF

- Dr. Joseph Gall — Director, Army Community Service
- Louise Ennesser — Information and Referral
- Monica Orecchio — Relocation Readiness
- Randy Stephenson — Employment Readiness
- Amy Weyhrauch — Financial Readiness
- Amy Weyhrauch — Army Emergency Relief (AER)
- Amy-Jo Johnson — Mobilization & Deployment/AFTB*
- Christina Overstreet — Army Volunteer Coordinator/AFAP**
- Josephine Toohey — Exceptional Family Member Program
- Shelley Ariosto — Family Advocacy Program/SHARP
- Dan Toohey — Family Advocacy Program Victim Advocate
- Sandy McLean — Survivor Outreach Services

SOLDIER AND FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER STAFF

- Amy Rodick — SFAC Supervisor
- Len Gomberg — Guidance Counselor
- Rachel Coleman — Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP)

*Army Family Team Building (AFTB)

**Army Family Action Plan (AFAP)



**ACS will be closed
26 April 2012**

We will be closed to take part in an Emergency Drill. If you have an AER, or FAP emergency please call 845-938-4621.

West Point Army Family Action Plan (AFAP)

AFAP provides the entire Army Family a voice to shape and improve their standards of living and quality of life. Community members identify and prioritize issues that require senior leadership resolution, and these issues are worked until they are successfully resolved. In some cases, issues are deemed unattainable and this is usually due to financial constraints.

While most seem skeptical of its success at first, the program has proven it's efficacy during its more than 25 years in existence. As of this year, AFAP has impacted changes Army-wide, including 126 legislative changes, 177 DoD or Army policy/regulatory changes, and 197 improvements to programs or services/funding. For more information about HQDA AFAP, including success stories visit www.myarmyonesource.com and select AFAP from the Family Programs and Services menu. This page will also now allow you to search active issues currently being worked.

The AFAP process begins locally. Each year, West Point conducts an AFAP conference. The 2012 Conference occurred February 22-24, 2012. Nine issues were prioritized by delegates and presented to the Superintendent:

- Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) Middle School Accelerated and Advanced Math Courses**
- West Point Commissary Monday Closure**
- DODEA Middle School Full Time Gifted Education Teacher**
- Military Spouse Preference Time Restriction**
- Federal Employment Assistance for Family Members with Disabilities**
- Military Spouse Preference Program One-Time Use**
- Military Dependents to Receive In-state Tuition for All Land Grant Universities**
- West Point Middle School Geometry Courses**
- Community High School Students Special Events**



More information about these issues and other active West Point AFAP issues can be found on the AFAP webpage at www.westpointmwr.com/afap.htm.

Issues that cannot be resolved locally may be elevated to HQDA AFAP for resolution. Each year, HQDA AFAP conducts a conference in which delegates review issues submitted by Army commands and prioritize those they feel warrant the attention of Army leadership. At the 2012 HQDA AFAP Conference, eight issues were prioritized and presented to senior Army leadership on 2 March 2012. The eight issues were:

1. Give survivors more time to invest the military death gratuity and Service members Group Life Insurance payment into a Roth Individual Retirement Account or Coverdell Education Savings Account. Currently there's a one-year deadline; families should have three, delegates said. Studies have recommended that survivors not make life-altering decisions within the first year after a loss. The AFAP participants said a year is not enough time for them to make an informed decision about the investment.
2. Authorize transportation and per diem for the service member's family to attend family therapy sessions in a residential treatment setting, when requested by behavioral health professionals.
3. Modify the Army's "Soldier's Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board Counseling Checklist" to warn of the ramifications of receiving concurrent payments of Veterans Affairs Department disability pay and Army retirement pay for medically retired veterans. The current information doesn't warn soldiers that overpayment of benefits will result in debt that must be repaid by medically retired veterans.
4. (Tie) Create an identification card that provides access to Army installations for those authorized to receive the Gold Star lapel button. Family members such as parents, siblings, and remarried widows/widowers have difficulty getting onto Army installations when traveling to view memorials, use Survivor Outreach Services, attend events or visit troops who served with their loved ones.
5. (Tie) Determine the proper level of care, or staffing ratio, in child, youth and school services facilities for children with special needs. Delegates said these programs do not consistently accommodate one-on-one assistance or reduced adult/child ratios for children with special needs.

(Continued on next page.)

6. Authorize honorably discharged disabled veterans with 10 percent or greater disability access to commissary, exchange, and morale, welfare and recreation benefits. Although details vary by benefit, current law allows access to these benefits to those who are 100 percent disabled.

7. Make it easier for federal employees who are spouses of military and federal employees to reach career tenure by increasing the break in service they can take when they must move with their spouse. Currently, a career conditional employee in the continental U.S. can have only a 30-day break in continuous creditable service to remain eligible for career tenure; delegates said that should be changed to 180 days when the spouse must relocate. (Note: This issue originated at West Point.)

8. Authorize wounded, ill and injured service members who have between 18 and 20 years of service to remain on active duty until the minimum retirement requirement and not be separated due to medical reasons. Delegates said some of these troops are being medically retired between 18 and 20 years, despite otherwise being eligible for sanctuary. Normally, once a service member reaches 18 years of service, he falls within the sanctuary law and can't be involuntarily separated until retirement eligibility is reached.

To ensure that issues are continually being worked, issue updates are provided by West Point agencies at quarterly Commander's Steering Committee meetings. Minutes are posted on the AFAP website once they have been approved by the Superintendent. The next meeting will be held May 15th at 2:30pm in the Jewish Chapel Social Hall. Members of the West Point community are welcome and encouraged to attend this meeting.

If you have a suggestion about how West Point or the Army can improve your quality of life, you are encouraged to submit an AFAP issue. Issues can be submitted at any time via the AFAP website. Additionally, we are seeking volunteers to assist with the planning and execution of the conference, as well as community members to participate as delegates during the conference. For additional information, please contact **Christina Overstreet, Army Family Action Plan Program Manager at (845) 938-3655** or e-mail: christina.overstreet@usma.edu.



West Point Hall of Heroes

Army Community Service has established a Hall of Heroes in building 622. The purpose of this is to honor the Service Members, in the New York area, who have died while serving their country on active duty. Service Members from all branches of the armed forces will be honored. If you have a loved one or know of a Family in our area who has lost a loved one please consider having them honored here at West Point. It is our way of honoring their memories and ensuring that they are never forgotten.

There is no cost to the Family; ACS will make arrangements to have the photo professionally matted and framed. We request that the photo be an 8x10 of the Service Member in uniform. (Photo may be mailed or sent electronically.) We will also need the following information: full name and rank, date of Birth, Date and Place of Death and the operation or unit that the Service Member was a part of.

We also have in the Hall of Heroes, a Book of Remembrance. We invite you, the surviving Family member, to submit a story or other writings about you Fallen Hero, so that those who view the Heroes photos will be able to have a small glimpse into their lives. Please make sure that the name of your Hero is included on all items you submit. Items may be sent to Sandy McLean, Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator by e-mail: sandy.s.mclean@us.army.mil or mailed to: Army Community Service, 622 Swift Road, West Point NY 10666 attention Sandy McLean.



**Like us on Facebook
by April 30, 2012
and you will be entered into a
drawing to win a basket of
ACS goodies.**

West Point Army Community Service



THANK YOU ACS VOLUNTEERS!

April 15th-21st is National Volunteer Week. This year, the Army has designated “Volunteers: The Force Behind the Force” as the theme for the week. We’d like to thank all of the volunteers who support our ACS Center throughout the year. Your contributions help us in so many ways, and we can never thank you enough. You truly are “The Force Behind the Force.”



Autism Awareness Month

April is Autism Awareness Month, which seeks to educate the public about the needs and challenges facing those with autism spectrum disorders. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) this disorder affects one in 88 children in the United States, thus prompting the CDC to refer to autism as a “national public health crisis. Boys are four times more likely than girls to be diagnosed on the spectrum. Yet while autism awareness is at an all time high, many parents are still in the dark as to how to make sure their child is physically and financially cared for if and when death or incapacity occurs.

As much as parents of special needs children hate to think about it, there will come a time when they are physically unable — or perhaps no longer alive — to oversee their child’s care. That is why long-term care plans must be put in place as soon as a diagnosis is made to ensure the child always stays physically and financially protected if the unthinkable occurs.

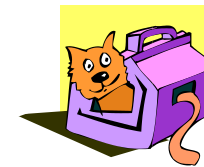
While the options for long-term care planning are broad and depend on the needs of the child, parents can simplify the process by starting with these 3 key planning steps:

1. **Name Guardians**- Immediately name guardians who can oversee your child’s care if something unexpectedly happens to you. Without such designations in place, the child could end up in a lengthy custody battle if the unthinkable happens. Parents need to think outside the box and focus on finding someone whose love and dedication to the child closely resemble your own. Finally, parents should give copies of their designations to the guardians themselves, as well as the child’s school, babysitters and even the neighbors so everyone knows exactly who to call if a crisis strikes.

2. **Set up a Special Needs Trust**- A special needs trust (also known as an SNT) is a legal tool that ensures a disabled child’s health care and living needs are taken care of if something happens to mom or dad. That while many parents have good intentions of leaving their child life insurance benefits or other assets in a will or Trust if they pass, leaving a child an inheritance outright could void their eligibility for Social Security or Medicaid in the future (which is often the only health care option available!). Instead, a trust helps to ensure that the child receives such financial benefits without actually having assets in their name—thus leaving all government benefits intact.

3. **Build a Team of Support**- It’s never too early to begin building a team of trusted caregivers and advisors who can immediately step in and help the child if a crisis occurs. Such team members may include the child’s legal guardians, a trusted doctor, financial advisor, estate planning attorney and dedicated family or friends. Building such a team now also helps to ensure you have the right people in place, as opposed to someone who will prey upon your child’s disability in an emergency.

Parents of special needs children must go into planning with the mindset that their child will require a lifetime of care. Fortunately, by starting with these 3 key steps, parents will make tremendous progress in ensuring their child is physically and financially cared for in their absence. **For additional information please contact Josephine Toohey, Exceptional Family Member Program Manager at 845-938-5655 or e-mail: josephine.toohey@us.army.mil.**



Shipping Your Pets



PCS season is upon us. This means scheduling the packers and movers. Giving the schools advance notice that we will need copies of our students’ records and transcripts. Cleaning out and preparing for the Spring Yard Sale. And, booking flights for Fido and Fluffy.

PCSing with pets is always a challenge but, even more so when PCSing entails flying over very large bodies of water for hours on end. If you are on orders to PCS overseas and you intend to take your pets with you, you have a lot of prep and planning to get done. Let’s get started.

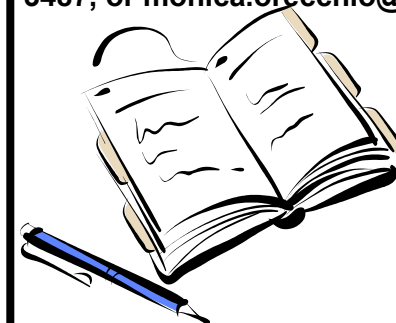
All destinations will require that you have documentation from a veterinarian certifying the health and immunizations of your pet. These immunizations need to be done at least 30 days but less than one year before travel. This time period is important to allow the immunizations time to take effect. Speak with your veterinarian for specific information on your pet and your destination.

When making transportation and flight arrangements, tell the travel office that you plan on taking your pets with you. Many airlines have restrictions on when it is safe for animals to fly due to the fact that animals over a certain weight will need to be shipped over in the cargo area of the plane which is not climate controlled. Some airlines do not allow pets to fly in the cabin area regardless of size or weight. Obviously, you will want to choose your airlines wisely based on their regulations for shipping pets.

There is the cost to consider as well. Shipping pets is not cheap. The Army does not pay to ship your animals so you will want to shop around for the best value. On most airlines, shipping a pet can range from a few hundred dollars for a dainty cat upwards to \$2000 or more for larger dogs. Do your research in advance so that you will know what the costs are BEFORE you arrive at the airport. If the costs are too much, you will need time to make arrangements for pet adoption by another caring family.

On the good news front, United Airlines just developed a new policy that has greatly reduced the pet shipping fees for their customers. A pet weighing up to 50 pounds may cost only \$309 while pets weighing 51 to 70 pounds may cost \$359. This is a significant savings in comparison to other airlines fees. Keep your fingers crossed that other airlines will follow suit. You can find out more by contacting a United Pet Safe desk for details on the special process.

The military-contracted Patriot Express flights are considerably cheaper in regards to pet shipping fees. On Patriot Express flight, a pet weighing up to 70 pounds would cost \$112 while a pet weighing 71 to 140 pounds would cost \$224. Patriot Express is the main way military passengers on official orders move to and from the U.S. and overseas. **For additional information please contact Monica Orecchio at 845-938-3487, or monica.orecchio@us.army.mil**



Mark your Calendar....

**18 April—Volunteer Recognition Ceremony
4:00– 6:00**

West Point Club

26 April—ACS will be closed for FAC Drill

Client will only be seen for emergencies—there will be no out-processing done on this day.

10 May— In recognition of Military Spouse Appreciation Day

Come Pamper Yourself at the ACS

“You’re a Star Spa”

9:00-11:30

14 June—Come Fly a Kite as ACS celebrates Army Birthday!

Please call ACS at 845-938-2519 for additional information on these and other events.