

ACS Gold Star Program

CARING
FOR
ARMY FAMILIES

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICES is continually at the forefront of helping Army service members and their families in relocation, finances, employment, family advocacy and much more. But during this time of prolonged conflicts in the world, a new program is being offered to assist those who may be touched by the tragedy of war.

The Gold Star Program is a brand new Department of the Army Initiative on Fort Bragg. It was started here on August 1, 2007 to provide assistance and offer support to address the needs of families who suffer the loss of a Soldier. This program, along with Casualty Assistance and other existing support groups, serves the spouses, children, parents and extended family who have lost a loved one and provides long term support and advocacy in the months and years following a loss.

Stephanie Glover, Gold Star Program Manager, said, "The program came about because the Director saw the need to continue to assist spouses, and to let them know that the Army had not forgotten the sacrifice that their family gave so that others may continue to have freedom."

The Gold Star Program's functions are to serve as a liaison between the Gold Star Family and their Unit Communication and contact information for special memorials and events; provide a location for peer support; and voice the concerns of Gold Star Families when necessary. The Gold Star Program extends care beyond what Care Teams and Casualty Assistance Officers can offer.

Services include referral to support groups, coordinating events and linking families to community resources and services. Glover serves as a resource for the military family in such areas as Casualty Assistance, Chain of Command, Family Readiness Groups and Care Teams. She said, "The Gold Star program is a sobering reminder that we are at war and that freedom is not free."

Glover provides training to Family Readiness Groups, Care Teams and Casualty Assistance Officers. Training may be provided on location or at ACS, and can be completed in less than one hour for the Gold Star portion. For more information on the Gold Star Program or to schedule training, call 907-8682. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm.

Connie Morales-Piper, a spouse survivor and Family Readiness Support Assistant with the Warrior Transition

Unit, shared the following:

"The Gold Star Program will be an asset to the Fort Bragg community because women like us are needed, especially if these wars continue. Surviving spouses have a unique perspective; and if we choose to, we can share our experience and offer caring support to other spouses whose husbands choose to fight this war on extremism and terror. It is not the average person who has the courage and valor to take the fight to an enemy in a treacherous land. Our husbands made a conscious choice to do there; because, first and foremost, they want to protect us; to know that we'll be safe; that our children will live good lives; and that our nation will remain strong. We surviving spouses supported our husbands; we were the ones who encouraged them to be strong and stay in the fight.

Another reason the Gold Star Program is valuable is because our husbands would want and appreciate their wives being taken care of. When this happens, a number of these surviving spouses (having survived severe emotional trauma), seek and need a means of giving back –to somehow carry on our husband's work in our own way. My thoughts are that if my husband had the desire, the passion, and the courage to volunteer to fight in the most dangerous places - where he knew bad things could happen, my contribution should be having a career where I can somehow help to make someone else's life just a little bit better. Working with our Wounded Warrior Families is incredibly satisfying to me. This is what my husband would have wanted for me. With certainty, I know this.

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by Amy Williams

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