



Army Families Online helps entire Army family

By Sgt. Chad T. Jones

There's more to ensuring a Soldier's well-being than three hots, a cot and the occasional pain reliever.

"Well and ready Soldiers must have their emotional, spiritual, mental and physical needs met," said Wayne V. Hall, Public Affairs Officer for the Army's Well Being Liaison Office (WBLO), the Pentagon. "We're (WBLO) about taking care of Soldiers and their families. And we try to help [family members] find what they need when their Soldiers are deployed."

The Army Families Online Web site, <http://www.wblo.org/home.asp> is one resource WBLO offers Soldiers and family members dealing with deployments, redeployments or other well-being issues.

Users can easily navigate the site and find anything from frequently used contact numbers to information on savings plans for deployed Soldiers.

The three most popular links, according to Hall, are FLO Notes, SmartBook and Frontline Stories.

FLO Notes are actually monthly briefs and stories that provide family members with the latest information on a variety of issues. The June edition includes a brief on the Department of the Army's new initiative that gives severely disabled Soldiers, such as those wounded during the Global War on Terrorism, an additional means of getting help once they are medically retired from the Army.

The SmartBook provides contact information and links to many sites family members of deployed Soldiers can use such as veteran benefits, Judge Advocate General services and how to reserve a room at the Hale Koa Hotel, the Armed Forces Recreation Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Frontline Stories combine words and pictures to showcase the Soldiers and their units who are making life better for Iraqi and Afghani civilians

The site also includes a link to the Disabled Soldiers Support System (DS3) that provides disabled Soldiers and their families with information on advocacy programs and other pertinent resources. Army Families Online also has a Download Center, news and glossary links and the new Deployment Cycle link.

"The deployment link provides information that helps those being left behind. It shows [family members] really do have everything they need to take care of themselves," said Hall.

Family members can click on different icons representing each stage of the deployment cycle and get a heads-up on the stressors they may expect. More importantly, they can learn what to do and who to contact to ease the stress.

Users may spend hours surfing the Internet looking for all of the information Army Families Online provides at one location that can be perused in minutes. That's because this easy-to-use, graphically pleasing site shows a true understanding of the keep-it-simple concept and, therefore, is a great site the entire Army family will want to add to their bookmarks.

How we rate it

Ease of use:
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Value to user:
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Design quality:
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Overall rating:
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

(Scale of 1-5 stars)

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