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Fort Drum FAP shedding light on domestic violence

FORT DRUM, N.Y.  – The Fort Drum Family Advocacy Program (FAP) staff met with Fort Drum family members at community centers last week and at Mountain Community Homes’ Fall Fest on Oct. 1 to promote Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

They were distributing “Purple Up Post” kits for families to make a decorative display of purple lights – the signature color for domestic violence awareness.

Anna Moffa, Family Advocacy Program educator, said the project is a way to shed some light on domestic violence within the community.

“This is something you can use as a centerpiece on your table, display it on your window pane or by your front door, just as a reminder about Domestic Violence Awareness Month,” she said. “If you drive around and start seeing purple lights everywhere, you start thinking about domestic violence and what that means.”

Each kit also came with a single white flower, which Moffa said represents the FAP theme of “One Thing.”

“We want people to think of the one thing they can do to prevent domestic violence,” she said. “If someone was a victim of domestic violence, it could be one thing that they speak up about or share with others to spread awareness.”

Community members can sign “One Thing” pledge cards, which are available at the Soldier and Family Readiness Center, the Family Resource Center, housing community centers and at FAP booths. Soldiers will receive pledge cards during unit troop training.

“We are asking community members to sign a pledge and commit to doing one thing each day that raises awareness and help end domestic violence in our communities,” said Tom Wojcikowski, Family Advocacy Program educator. “If everyone does one thing, we are one step closer to ending domestic violence in the community.”

He said there are numerous “One Things” people can do – whether it is taking a stress management class as a preventative action or making somewhere aware of the 24/7 Domestic Violence Crisis Line at (315) 955-4321.

FAP is also hosting an online cycling challenge with the goals of recording 1,619 miles – the distance between Fort Drum and Fort Polk, Louisiana. Wojcikowski said the idea for this distance is to bridge the two 10th Mountain Division (LI) communities to help end the cycle of abuse.

“At troop training, we talk about the cycle of abuse and how people allow stress to build up inside, which can lead to a physical, abusive incidence,” he said. “Then there is a period of remorse, and apology and promise that it won’t happen again. Then stressors lead to another incident, and the cycle of abuse continues.”

During the “Virtual Cycling to End the Cycle of Abuse” challenge, community members are asked to share a selfie and the distance they traveled each time and tag @FtdrumFAP when they post on Facebook.

Although registration has filled for this week’s “Cook with Your Mate” class, family members can still register for the “Paint with Your Mate” workshop on Oct. 19.

Wojcikowski said that whether they are cooking or painting together, the classes give couples a chance to learn more about building healthy relationships and dealing with stress.

“The additional benefit is that if any of those couples in the class know of anyone who is struggling in their relationship, they now have good information they can pass along to others,” Wojcikowski said. “It’s that trickle-down effect where everybody can pay it forward, so to speak.”

The Paint with Your Mate class was developed by one of the FAP educators who happens to be painter. Attendees learn stress management curriculum in the class, but it is presented in game show fashion with follow-up discussion.

“So it doesn’t quite feel like you’re sitting through a class or a Powerpoint presentation – you’re learning how to manage stress, but in a whole other way,” Wojcikowski said. “We had gotten a really good response from the Soldier and Family Readiness Groups (SFRGs) with a Paint Your Stress Away class.”

He said the best feedback they received from attendees was that they left feeling smarter about stress management without ever having felt bored.

The Paint with Your Mate class is held at the Enrichment Center, Bldg. 10262 on 4th Armored Division Drive. To register, call (315) 772-5914.

Outside the Soldier and Family Readiness Center, a large banner displays the slogan “Break the Silence,” to encourage people to be vocal about domestic violence.

“Break the Silence is about speaking up for victims of domestic abuse,” Wojcikowski said. “We speak up and speak out so it’s not one of those things we don’t talk about. It kind of goes along with our FAP theme, ‘One Thing.’ One thing we all can do is break the silence and speak up for victims.”

More than 10 million people experience domestic violence every year in the U.S. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, approximately 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner. About one in four women and one in nine men experience severe physical, sexual and / or mental trauma from an abusive relationship.

Domestic violence typically happens behind closed doors, and the victim often allows the abuse to continue in hopes of saving the relationship.

“One thing we like to make people aware is that domestic violence may be affecting someone you know, and they might be silent about,” said Nicole Wetzel, Family Advocacy Program educator. “During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we are trying to get people more aware of the warning signs and red flags, and what they can do to help.”

Common signs of abusive behavior in a partner include:

\*Telling you that you never do anything right

\*Showing extreme jealously of your friends or time spent away

\*Preventing or discouraging you from spending time with family and friends

\*Insulting, demeaning or shaming you, especially in front of others

\*Preventing you from making your own decisions

\*Intimidating you through threatening looks or actions

\*Destroying your belongings or property

Community members can learn more about domestic violence at [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org). For more information about FAP classes and activities, visit [www.facebook.com/FTdrumFAP](http://www.facebook.com/FTdrumFAP).

“The purpose of Domestic Violence Awareness Month is to create awareness about domestic violence and promote ways to prevent it in our community,” Wojcikowski said. “One of the ways we do that is getting the message out about the resources we have available. There are victim advocates here to help, and we have classes that address things that lead to domestic incidents in the home and just knowing what to do when someone needs assistance.”

Community members can contact a domestic abuse victim advocate at (315) 772-5605 or 772-8934. An official investigation of a crime initiates when a person chooses the unrestricted reporting option. The victim can openly report the abuse to whomever they chose, and they receive medical treatment and counseling during the investigation. To file an unrestricted report on post, call (315) 772-5616, or off post by calling 911.

Under the restricted reporting policy, a person may speak confidentially with victim advocates, the FAP manager, health care professionals and chaplains without initiating an official investigation. No police or military chain of command is involved.

To file a report of domestic violence, or if you are in imminent danger, call the Fort Drum Military Police at (315) 772-5156 or dial 911 off post.

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