



A Soldier with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division reunites with his family after a deployment at Fort Drum, New York, July 19, 2019. More than 1,700 Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team returned to Fort Drum, over the course of redeployments from Afghanistan and Kosovo. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

# Leadership and Your Soldiers' Quality of Life

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...My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind – [that is the] accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. ...I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own.

—US Army's, Creed of the Non-Commissioned Officer

**A**s leaders, one of our most important responsibilities is caring for our Soldiers and the Soldier's Family regardless if those in need are or are not within our direct span of control.

In caring for our Soldiers and their Families, we must ensure that we as Leaders are tightly woven into the support structure that provides those programs and services that are designed and provided to sustain, support,

improve and benefit the quality of life for our Soldiers, Family members, Retirees and our civilian employees. As Leaders we also have an inherent responsibility to help provide the oversight and support to these programs and services by ensuring that the services are provided and that Soldiers are afforded the opportunity to use the programs and services. Leaders at all levels play an important role in how well the Army's quality of life

programs are maintained. This requires being involved, knowing where to find these services and developing a good working relationship with the staff at their local US Army Garrison's Army Community Services (ACS) and knowing how to navigate the sources for the on-line support at: <http://myarmyonesource.com> and <http://militaryonesource.mil>.



Whether it was some helpful reminders or a discovery of much-needed support and services, there was something for everyone to learn at the 101 Days of Summer Health and Wellness Fair at Fort Drum, New York, June 13, 2019. The fair was hosted by the Fort Drum Prevention Programs Fair at the Exchange, and offered attendees a chance to familiarize themselves with organizations on posts, to include the Ready and Resilient Performance Center, Environmental Health and the Fort Drum Safety Office. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Leaders can also help improve the quality of these programs and services by remaining an active participant in Garrison councils and by also providing feedback to the Garrison Leadership. The Army's promise to Leaders, Soldiers, Families, Retires and Civilian employees is that the Army's leadership (at all levels) will do everything within their power to deliver programs at a level commensurate with the level of their service to our nation. But this promise also comes with a caveat... that is, Leaders must than understanding what are the wants, needs, benefits and services in relation to their organization. It is imperative that leaders be able to tell their Soldiers that the Army does not take care of ... (fill in the blank) for you. The point is, that many Leaders in the Army think that taking care of Soldiers is giving them everything that they want, fix every problem they bring to the leaders attention and not holding the Soldier responsible for their own actions. They routinely give them the fish rather than teaching them how to fish. The programs and services provided by the Army in order

to assist the Leader in caring for their Soldier largely attempt to teach our Soldiers how to fish...that is to be Ready and Resilient.

What is quality of life, how far into one's personal life does it extend, and where do the lines of leadership and personal responsibility meet? From my experience, quality of life should be looked at in three different areas:

quality of life in one's working environment, quality of life in one's personal and Family environment and quality of life in one's community environment. What leadership defines as quality of life is ensuring that individuals have uninhibited and equal access to services, programs, opportunities and benefits as guaranteed as part of one's employment in the Army. One of the hardest leadership responsibilities we have is to deal with the quality of life issues and challenges of our Soldiers. Many leaders feel that if the issue is not work related, then it is not really their problem or their responsibility. I would submit that any issue that one of our Soldiers may have should be considered as our problem

as well. Proactive Leaders who know their Soldier(s) and show that they care have a greater impact on a Soldier's quality of life. Leaders who lead...not manage...are able to get out in front of those issues, which if not addressed or fixed in a timely manner, may impact the unit's mission and/or readiness.

Unlike many other occupations, being a Soldier and a Leader comes with many additional responsibilities and expectations that most employers outside of the military do or will not become involved with. As Leaders, we must understand that a fundamental part of being a Leader is ensuring that the quality of life for our Soldiers and their Families is one of our top priorities. Given the nature of our profession and the need for leaders to ensure the proper focus on Soldier quality of life issues, there is clearly a need for many of the support services we are afforded always ensuring that additional help and resources are made directly available to Soldiers, Leaders and Commanders. It is also important for leaders to understand why so much



emphasis is placed on providing these program and services to help support a well-balanced quality of life for Soldiers and their Families. The established Army programs that are focused on supporting and enhancing the Soldiers quality of life issues are designed to do several things: (listed in no particular order)

- Provided programs and services are set up to afford reactive services to address currently active or emergency issues. Soldiers and Family members may be using these services on a volunteer basis or on a Command directed basis.
- Provided programs and services are set up to be used as a preventive tool. Soldiers and their Family members may be seeking these services or information on their own or as directed/recommended by their leadership in order to prevent issues.
- Provided programs and services and/or support programs that are used to train or inform our Soldiers, Families and Leaders about how programs and services can be used, what programs and services are available or where to find programs and services.

and in turn, help avoid a situation that could potentially impact the Soldier's ability to perform their mission at their highest level of performance. In October 2007 after three years of combat in two theaters of war, the Army leadership found it necessary to re-focus their efforts towards the Soldier's quality of life and to reaffirm the Army's commitment of resources and leadership attention towards the quality of life of our Soldiers, Families, civilians and retirees. In response to the needs of our Soldiers and Families the Army's leadership developed the "Army Family Covenant". The Army Family Covenant, first signed by the Secretary of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Sergeant Major of the Army pledges to provide Soldiers and their Families with a level of support commensurate with their level of service. Our role as leaders as explained earlier is to ensure that these services are readily available to all members of the Army, National Guard, Reserves and those who were assigned to missions that were not geographically close to a military installation.

### Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers

As Leaders, there is one program that specifically focuses on our Single Soldiers and is designed to keep their needs and quality of life issues in view of leadership at all levels. Over the years, from my point of view, this

program has lost some luster, has been or is misunderstood by some Leaders, seen as a distracter to mission accomplishment or not seen as a Commander's program. Bottom line, while there are some Leaders who do not view the BOSS program as a Commander's program, it is. Look at all of the potential contact that a leader has if involved in the BOSS program. First Sergeants, if you want to really know what is going on in your barracks...ask BOSS. If you look at all of the negative statistics, many involve Soldiers in the ages of 18 to 24 years old... that is the target audience for BOSS. Leaders at all levels need to embrace this great program, lend your



U.S. Army Pvt. Shawn M. Grace, a geospatial engineer with the 2nd Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division, plays a game of pool at the Pfc. Ross A. Ginnis Warrior Zone to relax after a long day at work, March 26, 2019. Soldiers enjoy the many amenities offered by both the Pfc. Ross A. Ginnis Warrior Zone and Recreation Center at little to no cost seven days a week. (U.S. Army photo by KATUSA Cpl. Park, Seung Ho, 2ID/RUCD Public Affairs)

As a leader, ensuring that your Soldiers are well cared for and that those with Family members know where to find the assistance they need, will help to ease a burden

support (the Soldiers will do the work; they just need your support!), encouragement, guidance and wisdom. Use BOSS as an opportunity to groom some of your

up and coming Leaders. Also look at you core group of Soldiers who are actively engaged in the BOSS program, these are Leaders in the BOSS community and sadly at some Garrisons, the only ones who participate. I have to admit, that years ago I did not see the merits of the BOSS program, mainly because my senior Leadership did not see the value in the program and they did not support the BOSS efforts. Years later I get it...it is one of the best opportunities we have to make some serious progress in our Single Soldier's quality of life.

I wanted to provide a little history and a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer's perspective on the BOSS program, the following narrative is provided by SGT Adam Hughes, the current DA BOSS Representative stationed at Fort Sam Houston with the IMCOM, G-9 FMWR Staff.

In 1989, the US Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC) and Major Army Commands were tasked to develop a program to encourage single Soldiers to become involved in determining their recreation and leisure needs. Implementation of the BOSS program began with single Soldier focus groups. In early workshops, QOL issues emerged, along with issues relating to recreation and leisure needs. These issues were presented to the local command as part of the workshop out-brief. In 1991, the Chief of Staff of the Army formally expanded the BOSS program to include all areas of single Soldiers' lives. This change provided single Soldiers an opportunity to surface QOL issues through their chain of command. As the program evolved, single Soldiers indicated a desire to participate in activities related to community support; this interest was adopted as another component of the program. At the 1995 Army-wide BOSS conference, attendees identified the lack of BOSS guidance and program standardization as one of the top five QOL issues or concerns for single Soldiers. In 2011 US-ACFSC became G-9 under the Installation Management Command (IMCOM).

This program's mission is to enhance the quality of life and morale of Single Soldiers, increase retention, sustain readiness and maintain the all volunteer force supporting an expeditionary mindset and the ARFORGEN model. It is the program of choice for properly vetting and identifying Single Soldiers' perspective, ideas, feedback and input for all levels of Army planning.

What does the BOSS program do for Soldiers and Leaders? BOSS identifies Quality of Life issues and concerns, and recommends improvements through the respective chain of command. BOSS encourages and assists Single Soldiers in identifying and planning for recreational and leisure activities. Additionally, BOSS gives Single Soldiers the opportunity to participate in and contribute to their local and surrounding communities.

What are the efforts of BOSS? There are three main efforts of BOSS which are called the pillars of the BOSS Program. They are:

- **Quality of life** – This includes anything affecting the Single Soldier's living environment and can directly or indirectly influence their morale and personal growth/development. Quality of Life Issues are identified and raised during installation BOSS meetings or reported to the installation BOSS HQ. Issues that can't be resolved will be coordinated through the AFAP office for formatting, content and authentication. The proper execution of Quality of Life opportunities gives unit leadership the chance to enhance the morale and living environment. Soldier issues can be resolved at lowest level while unresolved issues are forwarded through AFAP. Issue examples include: Barracks improvements; Life skills; Campaigns; etc.
- **Recreation and Leisure** – The recreation and leisure pillar of the BOSS Program deals with influencing Single Soldiers lives by increasing their morale and welfare. By providing recreational opportunities specific to Single Soldiers, we support their inclusion as part of the "Total Army Family". Recreational and leisure events are Single Soldier planned, by the installation BOSS Council and then assisted and supported by the FMWR Advisor and the Senior Military Advisor to ensure the events are effectively executed. This is truly a way Senior Leaders and the Dept. of the Army show that they provide Single Soldiers with a quality of life commensurate with the quality of their service.
- **Community Service** – This pillar builds a rapport with the community by supporting existing volunteer programs. It also provides visibility to the BOSS Program and the installation and gives Soldiers an opportunity to give back to the community in which they live and work.

### **Benefits of BOSS to the Command**

- Enhance Morale and Welfare (QOL)
- Reduction of aberrant behavior (assaults/traffic accidents, alcohol related incidents/DUI/DWI)
- Provide Recreation and Leisure events to Soldiers
- Conduit of information between Soldier and Command

- Improve Esprit de Corps
- Supports Command METL

### Benefits of BOSS to the Community

- Contribute to installation volunteer program
- Builds good rapport with community
- Integrates Soldiers into the community
- Builds upon the positive image of a Soldier for the community

### The Bottom Line in providing Quality of Life – Leadership

As Leaders, we have a choice everyday...to be involved or to not be involved. To illustrate this point, I refer you back to 29 July 2010; then Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Peter Chiarelli released his report on the Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention study that he initiated in order to determine the overall health of the force. In this report General Chiarelli noted that there were many instances where Leaders across the Army had lost the art-of-leadership in a garrison environment. To me this comment means that Leaders of all ranks and ages have either forgot how to take care of Soldiers and their Families while operating in a garrison environment, have become too pre-occupied to take care of Soldiers and Families or

that they simply did not know because they had not yet been taught (by example) by another leader on how to care for Soldiers and Families. To me this comment by the Vice was a sobering call to action directed toward every Leader in our Army. While this question may have hurt a little professionally, as a Leader it caused me to think... have I lost my art-of-leadership, or have I not properly trained my subordinate Leaders to provide and ensure that those aspects of a Soldier's quality of life are met? General Chiarelli's in depth 234 page (plus annexes) report reveals to Leaders what Leaders have always known...that our responsibilities are not only to complete our mission, but to also take care of those placed in our care. This was a call to all leaders designed to get them involved, so that they know their Soldiers, and to look for those indicators that precede acts of high risk behavior or other destructive acts. The resources, programs and services that directly impact your Soldiers, Families, Retirees and Civilian Employees are available, accessible and effective!

If you would like to learn more about this topic it is recommended that you now take the time to read AR 215-1 for command guidance on FMWR activities, AR 210-50 for Housing Management or visit the following websites at: <http://myarmyonesource.com>; <http://militaryonesource.mil>; <http://www.armymwr.com>; and <https://home.army.mil/imcom/> for more detailed information or help in obtaining the right service for your Soldiers. ■



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