

PEP offers new perspective for newcomer spouses

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Monitor Staff

In an effort to provide newcomer spouses with a positive outlook of their new surroundings, the Fort Bliss Army Community Service initiated the People Encouraging People program, designed to spunk-up even the gloomiest viewpoints.

The PEP program began in January and has received great reviews from the attendees, according to Cher Poehlein, relocation readiness manager, who brought the idea from her previous duty station in Germany.

Spouses are encouraged to attend the three-day program, which will enhance their knowledge of the services available here, along with a two-hour introduction of the Spanish language and culture. They also have the opportunity to make new friends and explore their new horizons with the help of Poehlein, who is congenially referred to as the "bubbly tour guide."

People with children will receive free child care for up to 15 hours a week per child.

The tour includes Fort Bliss, William Beaumont Army Medical Center, Biggs Army Airfield, Old Mesilla and El Paso, to include the downtown area.

"There are great shopping opportunities downtown," said Shirley Gaymon, attendee. "It was quite interesting. I have never been this far west in the country. At the stores, they bare-



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People Encouraging People participants head off to a tour of Old Mesilla April 12.

ly spoke English, and I don't speak Spanish, but I'm going to learn while I'm here. This program has given me new perspectives on things."

"Everybody walked back with packages," said Poehlein excitedly.

The April class was composed of spouses from five different countries. One was from South Africa and has only been in the United States for a month. Other countries were Germany, Jamaica, the Philippines, Switzerland and the Guam territory.

Lilly Reed, attendee, said due to the PEP program, she is now enrolled in a Spanish language class, a resume writing class and an interviewing techniques course.

Sharon Nettles, the only U.S. spouse from California in the group, said, "I thought this program was excellent because I have children at home, and they provided free child care. That gave me a chance to get acquainted with other people and the community. I feel like, at least now, I

have the tools to get around and start a life here."

Poehlein gives a bit of advice to all participants, "Get out and learn about the community you live in. Volunteering is a great way to learn about the culture and to gain experience at the same time. Don't let the language barrier hinder you."

For more information or to register for the PEP program, call 568-1132.

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