

ACS: helping Soldiers, families for 41 years

TEPHANIE HOPPER

ACS

The Army Community Service was developed out of an assignment 43 years ago from the Army chief of staff for personnel to launch and develop a plan for the creation of an Army-wide social service program. The responsibility for the development of the program was a Fort Bliss Soldier named Lt. Col. Emma Marie Baird.

Though confronted with challenges from some and great support from others, Gen. Harold K. Johnson, Army chief of staff, announced the approval and establishment of ACS July 25, 1965. A logo was designed, and the "Self-help, Service and Stability" motto was established.

Prior to the establishment of ACS, volunteer Army wives operated lending closets, raised funds for those in need, taught and instructed the inexperienced and assisted in emergencies. After the program was brought to fruition, volunteers continued as they do today – to be there to assist families. Their support to the many services provided continues to be of high value.

Though ACS's motto for the 21st century is now "Real Life Solutions for Successful Army Living," ACS continues with the objective to assist commanders in the readiness of individuals, families and communities within the Army by developing, coordinating and delivering services, which promote self-reliance. Programs that make up ACS are: the Family Advocacy program, which is dedicated to spousal and child abuse prevention, education, prompt reporting, investigation, intervention and treatment; Financial Readiness program, which educates Soldiers in money management, proper use of credit and financial planning; Army Emergency Relief, which provides financial assistance to Soldiers and their family members in time of valid emergency need; and Relocation Assistance, which assists Soldiers and family members with pre- and post-move needs and provides sponsorship training information and referral. Other ACS programs include:



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Lt. Col. William G. Hill, consultant to Army Community Services, deputy chief of staff for personnel, Washington, D.C., and Lt. Col. E. M. Baird, 4th Army ACS officer, discuss ACS workshop agenda at Fort Bliss Sept. 20, 1967.

the Exceptional Family Member program that provides comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical and personnel services to families with special needs; Army Family Team Building, a volunteer-led organization with a core objective to train spouses and family members to support the total Army effort; Mobilization and Deployment, which provides assistance to military operations, mobilizations, disaster operations, and Stability and Support Operations to enhance Soldier and family readiness; Family Readiness Groups that

provide comprehensive readiness in support of families during the deployment cycle; and a Family Member Employment program, which provides military spouses tools needed to successfully obtain and maintain employment through classes and the Army Spouse Employment Partnership. Lastly, the Army Volunteer Corps provides a range of volunteer opportunities and volunteer management training to significantly enhance the well-being and readiness of the military community.

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