

# ARMY: Soldiers supported on site



Brian Baldwin Clackamas Print

Staff Sergeant Epp and Jessica Epp share a moment before the beginning of the Army Strong Community Center grand opening on Saturday, May 14 in the Gregory room on the Clackamas Community College Oregon City campus. Staff Sergeant Epp is a soldier in the First Infantry Division.

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Unfortunately this new community center is only one of four in the entire nation and is having trouble expanding due to a tight budget.

"Money was no object, everybody would have access to an Army Strong Community Center just like the local post office," said Laura Stultz. "We'd like to have some more pilots at VA hospitals, VA centers and we're even looking at a clinic."

The general echoed his wife's sentiments but emphasized that these centers need to be fiscally efficient, and that's where community involvement comes in.

"You can put an outreach like this where the community is giving the space and I'm spending money on two to be there, it's pretty efficient," said Jack Stultz. "We've got the military and the government to realize 'Wow, this is a pretty efficient operation.'"

The general hopes that once they realize how valuable this program is, the government or the military will help fund the program to fill in the "white space" where Army Strong Community Centers are needed across the country. The ASCC will be focusing next on heavy population centers of soldiers in California, Texas and Florida according to the general.

As Jack Stultz stated at the ribbon cutting ceremony, the ASCC has had success in the past and continues to do so, including the story of one army wife that had left her home at Fort Lewis to live in North Carolina because of the reports of heavy casualties coming in about her husband's unit overseas. She had gone to the ASCC in Brevard, N.C. to see if they could help her with her problem.

The center was able to help her find out that her husband was coming home the following month, but she had no money with which to return home. "Within a matter of hours she had her plane tickets because the community was plugged in," said Jack Stultz.

Another story that the general highlighted was that an unem-

ployed veteran who requested help in CCC's center. He was seeking support for his family as he had two kids and his wife was expecting a third. Barbara McCain and Paul Teters, the two coordinators in Clackamas' center, were able to identify that he was eligible for the G.I. Bill and a number of benefits that Oregon provides for veterans. Now he will be going to CCC in the spring, have his education paid for and will have money to help support his family.

Cody McCain is a former student of Clackamas who is currently living in North Carolina now that he is enlisted. His mother is one of the two employees for the ASCC at the college.

"It's a great thing for the people here who are trying to take advantage of the things the Army does for the families that are back home when their guys are deployed," said Cody McCain. "I'm really proud of my mom. She's doing wonderful things for the soldiers and their families back home."

Truesdell said that her ultimate vision for the center would be to ensure that everybody who is a veteran or active duty personnel and their families knows there is help.

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