

ARMY CENTER TO CLOSE IN JUNE

STORY AND PHOTO BY TOM BOGGESS

The Army Strong Community Center, located on the Oregon City campus, is closing its doors June 30.

It will be missed by the veterans use the service and depend on this facility. The Army is focused on the big picture, not the local effect of the closure.

Nick Hadley, former staff member of The Clackamas Print, now associated with the Army Strong Community Center, said that, "The families and veterans are going to suffer." He also said that there's no turning back now, it's official.

"It is just a budgetary thing, basically trying to get more bang for their buck."

RB Green

William E. Burkhalter, customer support coordinator for the Army Strong center, said, "The Army Strong project from its inception was a pilot project and it was championed by Gen. Talley from the Army Reserve and his wife."

What this entire center does for veterans will be turned over to the Fort Family Initiative, which is a hotline available to veterans 24/7, 365 days a year. The advantage of this is that veterans and their families can get help at any time; although, there are limited hours available

in which the army strong center can help.

Burkhalter said, "The Army Strong initiative has helped a lot of veterans and their families and this is no way a punitive decision. The Army Strong center is a valuable resource, but they started to realize we were duplicating effort in a lot of ways."

Only six of these facilities exist. The one on campus is the only one West of Michigan. All but two these facilities are located within an Army Reserve Center. The college's facility helps vets and their families connect with organizations that can provide help for all of life's necessities.

The Vet Center and the Army Strong Community Center work together on a number of things pertaining to vets and family members, but the Vet Center mainly focuses on educational benefits for people in the military.

RB Green, veteran affairs coordinator, said, "It is just a budgetary thing, basically trying to get more bang for their buck." He went on to say that the decision to cancel was made at a national level and it was an entire program that was taken away.

Green said, "The one who made the decision to close this program probably didn't have any knowledge about our needs here at this facility. This was a great facility for veterans and even good for the community."

On April 18, the notice was posted on the front door of the Army Strong office announcing the closure. It also said that the Army will continue providing services that connect veterans and family members with critical resources.



William E. Burkhalter is the customer support coordinator for the Army Strong Community Center.

Illustration by Saige Keikkala

