



CompanyCommand

Building Combat-Ready Teams



To: Company Commanders and their FRG Leaders
From: Company Commanders and their FRG Leaders

Commander-FRG Leader Teams

“You enlist the soldier. You reenlist the family.” Great leaders understand the power of this maxim. In a high-OPTEMPO Army, the importance of the Family Readiness Group (FRG) cannot be overstated. A resourceful, motivated FRG leader can make all the difference to the spouses and children left behind when a unit deploys.

Commanders and their FRG leaders work together as teams, and so do their respective forums—Company-Command and FRG Leader. Listen in as experienced company commanders and FRG leaders talk about working together to make a difference for Soldiers and their families.

Barbie Pepple
HHC, 21st TSC

When I was appointed FRG leader, we had to start from scratch. In three months time, our company commander, O’Shea J. White, has established and signed off on all required SOPs. He has now added the FRG to the unit budget, we now hold monthly FRG newcomers luncheons, and

he has written and signed appointment orders for every key volunteer. The Family Readiness liaison, the Family Readiness support assistant and I now have weekly meetings to ensure everything gets done that needs to be done. He has also ensured the FRG now holds monthly meetings. Whereas before there may have been 20 people who showed up for the meetings, now there are more than 130.



CPT O’Shea J. White stands in formation with Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 21st Theater Sustainment Command.

Our company commander even gave the FRG four rooms in the building where he works. One room has four computers for FRG training and is always accessible to the Soldiers and family members to use to ensure they stay in contact with family members back home and down range. Another room is the FRG meeting room, filled with tables and chairs along with all administrative supplies the FRG needs. The two other rooms are used as children's playrooms during FRG meetings.

CPT White will be leaving soon, but he is leaving the FRG better off than when he arrived. Even though he will be moving on, he is still planning to ensure that the fundraisers and the holiday party (which he will miss) are going to be the best yet. He is an amazing man with an amazing family. The FRG, the Soldiers and the family members will be forever grateful for all he has done for this unit.

Jerry Brown
877th QM CO

My FRG leader, Karen Brown, and my FRG liaison, Aaron Sweet, have made great strides in developing a one-woman program into 10 spouses that are willing to help at a drop of a hat. We started with nothing in the FRG funds account and now, in less than six months, we are above \$1,000. The FRG program has filled the void between information on what the unit is doing and then getting that information back to the spouses at home. The newsletter has been a great tool. Because it goes directly to the spouses, now they know pretty much everything I know when it comes down to events that affect the unit.

Traci Cook
B/1-39 FA (MLRS)

My favorite event planned by our battery commander, Nate Cook, was a "Family Day in the Field." The unit had a three-week training event, so he planned a day in the middle of that training for the families to come to the field and see their Soldiers in action. We had a high participation rate, and the families really enjoyed the time.

He had a bus come pick us up and take us out to the field, where the unit was training. We were able to see where they were training and get a real feel for what they were doing out there. One spouse told me that in 18-plus years in the Army, she'd never known what it was like for him during the field exercises.

Families brought yummy picnic meals with lots of cold drinks (we were in hot and steamy Georgia during the summer), and the Soldiers showed us how to eat Meals Ready to Eat. The kids loved that. We all brought lots of extra food for the single Soldiers. We even had some parents come in from out of town to see their single Soldiers. It was a very fun day focused on families and a nice break for the Soldiers as well.

I thought this was exceptional because it brought the entire unit together for a day of fun and showed us (the families) a part of the Soldiers' lives that we had never experienced before. I love that our battery commander was thinking about us back home.

Phillip Griffin
A/2-183 CAV

I would like to commend the A/2-183d CAV FRG Team (Mrs. Olivia Pernula and Mrs. Megan Griffin), among other volunteers, for their tremendous work on behalf of our Soldiers.

The FRG leaders sponsored an FRG coffee to ensure that the FRG is responsive, available and committed to the family members of the unit. They plan to continue these coffees. The FRG reps also assisted in multiple premobilization family fairs to disseminate deployment information and support to the families. They then participated in the planning and conduct of a first-rate unit departure ceremony at which family members were invited to send off their Soldiers in style. The FRG leaders assisted in developing and implementing a key-caller phone tree to ensure that information is disseminated and family members are kept up-to-date on events. The FRG sponsored a children's playdate at a local mall to provide support and recreation to unit family members. This great team routinely relays family issues to the unit leadership to assist in the quick resolution of family matters, which has had a positive impact on Soldiers and their families. One of my FRG leaders even went to a national-level FRG conference in Chicago to maintain awareness of current FRG operations and to maintain FRG contacts.

What a wonderful job they continue to do—taking care of the troops and relaying information to family members. We truly couldn't do our job without them.

Angela Crist
66th Transportation CO

I have two very memorable actions from our company commander, Fred Crist.

First, he recognized our FRG volunteers with Department of the Army awards. Initially, when he was researching these awards, the battalion was not familiar with the proper procedures, so there was a lot of legwork involved. However, our commander prevailed and honored our FRG volunteers with this special recognition.

Second, we had a children's art contest in honor of the Month of the Military Child. My commander not only acknowledged all of the children at the event, but he also invited the battalion commander to attend, and each child received a battalion coin. Having the battalion commander present was a huge deal because the unit headquarters was located more than an hour away, plus he was not married and had no children. Seeing our leaders interacting with these kids was adorable, but most important, it revealed their compassionate side.

Michael Lazo
A/118 MED BN (AS)

Our FRG leader, Cathy Lazo, did an excellent job in keeping families involved. She organized a clothing drive, which kept all families active. The drive also led to a free flow of information as it opened up great lines of communi-



Cathy Lazo and family members of the Company A, 118th Medical Battalion FRG are about to enjoy a Halloween hayride.

cation. Once the clothes were collected, they were sent to us in Iraq for distribution to the local town. Now that I have moved to a new unit, she is heavily involved in standing up the new FRG. She has been and continues to be a great asset.

Jeffrey Burnett
A CO, AFNORTH BN

I was in command of a U.S. Army company in NATO for 32 months. Although I recently departed command, I feel

obliged to respond and outline some of the achievements my exceptional SFRG (we called it Soldier and Family Readiness Group) leader accomplished. She was directly responsible for outright improving the quality of life for U.S. Army Soldiers and their family members, and she had a positive impact on those with whom she came in contact and helped serve throughout the international community. My SFRG leader assisted me in maintaining readiness of Soldiers and their families by promoting self-sufficiency, resiliency and stability in garrison and during individual NATO

deployments. My SFRG leader spearheaded the U.S. delegation's role in supporting the American Family Humanitarian Aid Distribution to Serbian villages in Plemetina and Azotikut, Kosovo, in January and February 2005. This included leading the drive for generous donation of clothes and



Cari Burnett, SFRG leader, helps her son, Gavin Burnett, at the arts-and-crafts table at the 2004 Allied Forces Northern Europe Battalion Christmas party.

miscellaneous items that totaled more than 30 boxes, which she personally delivered to the U.S. Post Office and mailed through MPS to Kosovo Forces Headquarters in Film City, Kosovo. In addition, she made certain that Soldiers deployed to Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq received care packages, particularly during the holiday seasons, including sending thank-you and holiday cards signed by members of the company. She also made personal telephone calls to family members of deployed Soldiers on a weekly basis, to let them know the importance of their role and that there is support available from the company, battalion and local community. My SFRG leader served as or assisted the welcome coordinator, ensuring new Soldiers and family members received a welcome bag of fruits, goodies and community information within the first few days upon their arrival at the local hotel. By helping ease the transition to their assigned duty location, she made a positive first impression for many Soldiers and family members. And last, but certainly not least, she cooked for and conducted numerous bake sale and breakfast fund-raisers to increase money for the SFRG and also coordinated meals for families with newborns, personally bringing the meals to their homes. Her constant enthusiasm, exceptional leadership abilities and untiring drive are based on her desire to take care of military family members and had a direct positive impact on the company, the battalion and U.S. Army. My command would not have been nearly as successful without my SFRG leader and her dedicated support.

Tamara Slagle
B/725 SB

I've just taken over our FRG but have already had a wonderful experience with the commander, Tony Lindh. The unit is currently deployed, and I have not yet even met the man in person, but he has taken the time to e-mail me personally to tell me about himself and his wife. He has sent me pictures of him and the Soldiers in the unit and has been a great help. He was fast acting to get me my appointment letter and has tried to keep me updated weekly. I'm sure that once they return home we will get along fine and make the FRG a success and something the family members will want to be involved in.

CPT Tony Lindh, commander of Company B, 725th Support Battalion (Airborne), contacted his new FRG leader quickly to provide updates on the Soldiers.

Rose Smyth
C/407 BSB

My FRG leader, Cheryl Monette, has been absolutely exceptional. She coordinated for our family members to participate in a "Walk to Iraq and Back" to keep the spouses, children, family and friends involved with a goal that they could focus on as individuals and at their own pace while we were away. This activity was available for anyone, not just the family members located at our post. We have family members participating all over the United States. For every 15 minutes of exercise, they are granted one mile towards the mileage log that tracks how far along their route they are. Our FRG Team called itself "Charlie's on the Warpath" to mirror our company motto. Currently, our team remains in first place and has logged in more than 2,000 miles. They have until April 2008 to complete their trek. It's been pretty inspiring that our FRG chose to do something that not only provides them a goal but keeps them health-conscious as well. I'm really proud of them.

Heather Muder
E/4-227 ARB

Shortly after our battalion deployed, I received a handwritten letter from the battalion commander thanking me for my sacrifice during my husband's deployment. I was so impressed that my husband's commander would take the time to write me a note from Iraq saying what a fantastic job he was doing as a company commander and that the Army's mission could not be accomplished without the sup-



port I provided my husband during the months ahead.

I wanted the other women in the company to feel this same sense of pride, both for their husbands and the sacrifices they were making by completing daily tasks (working, raising children, etc.) without their Soldiers. My husband agreed and handwrote each Soldier's spouse a letter thanking her for her support of her husband, the company and the Army's mission. He personalized each one with details about her Soldier.

Although it was a time-consuming process for him to complete, the wives received his letters with tremendous gratitude. This gesture helped solidify bonds within the FRG, drew connections between the spouses and their husbands' careers and filled hearts with hope and pride.

Anthony Borowski
582nd MED LOG CO

Our FRG leader, Kimberly Borowski, has done an outstanding job in supporting our company before, during and after our deployment to Afghanistan. To ensure a mission is successful, communication is paramount. This goes the same for my wife as she continues not only to stay involved with our FRG leaders at the battalion and brigade level, but also with all of the spouses in the company to make certain that they have up-to-date information about how the com-

pany was doing during the deployment. It is also key that both the FRG leader along with the rear detachment work together as a team, not only to delegate responsibilities to maintain the morale of our deployed Soldiers, but also to assist each other in providing information that can better prepare our company during and after the homecoming. Clearly, involvement is the cornerstone not only of a successful FRG that helps with unit morale, but it is also a means to support our international relations with our host country by providing humanitarian relief such as clothing and school supplies.

It would be a detriment for a company commander not to have an effective and engaging FRG. This support element is a vital asset in the commander's arsenal, not only for Soldier issues, but also to assist the unit in its specific missions while deployed.

The intent of this article is to highlight a small fraction of the great things that company commanders and FRG leaders are doing for one another. If you are a current officer or FRG leader and have ideas about how to better take care of Soldiers and their families, we invite you to log on to <http://companycommand.army.mil> or <http://frgleader.army.mil> and join the conversation.

About CompanyCommand

CC is a place for company-level commanders—current, past and future—to connect and share ideas and experiences. This is YOUR forum—it is voluntary, grassroots, by and for company commanders and is focused like a laser beam on CompanyCommand. By joining, you are gaining access to an amazing community of professionals who love Soldiers and are committed to building combat-effective teams. Collectively, as a profession, we possess the knowledge that can enable us to build and lead our units more effectively. With this in mind, please participate, contribute and tap into the experiences of others. You'll never know the full impact of taking a moment to share your experience with others!

About FRG Leader

FRG Leader is the place where motivated FRG leaders—past, present and future—connect to share ideas and experiences. The energy that is generated in this community is the direct result of heroes like YOU who have a passion to connect and serve with other like-minded individuals. This community understands what it means to be an FRG leader. Having others we can identify with is a very powerful component in supporting

each other as we serve and lead Soldiers and their families. The FRG Leader forum conversations are candid, creative and focused on solutions. We extend a warmhearted invitation to you to join and meet with FRG leaders from around the Army. Most important, let us know what is working (or not working) for you. We look forward to learning with you as we serve the families of the U.S. Army.

