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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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Fort Leonard Wood senior leaders talk SHARP

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – "Protecting our people protects our mission," was the message Col. Geoffrey Catlett, SHARP Academy director, stressed during the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month Senior Leader Luncheon held April 13 at Fort Leonard Wood's Pershing Community Center.

Catlett quoted the Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Mark Milley while speaking on how sexual violence compromises unit and mission readiness.

"Incidents of sexual assault will bring a unit to its knees and will take it at least a year to get readiness to where it needs to be for combat," he said. "There is a direct correlation between this and unit readiness. Those intangibles, that trust, the discipline, unit cohesion, are all destroyed when this happens in our ranks."

Catlett went on to quote statistics from reports published by the Center for Disease Control, which show 20 percent of women in our society are likely to be a survivor of sexual assault and 25 percent of women and 17 percent of men will be sexually abused as children.

"Those are pretty disturbing numbers," he said. "We know sexual violence is not just an Army problem. We are a reflection of society."

He said bystander intervention plays a large part in victory over sexual assaults. Catlett said roughly 40 percent of women who have been assaulted were harassed by the perpetrator first and 20 percent were stalked before being assaulted.

"We use the old adage in the Army that 90 percent of your problems come from 10 percent of your Soldiers," Catlett said. "Let me tell you, 90 percent of your Soldiers are never going to sexually harass or assault someone, but are they going to tolerate it? Are they going to stand by and watch it?"

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He stressed that leaders need to be involved in every aspect of the problem and teach Soldiers what is right and what won't be tolerated.

According to Catlett, the numbers of reports being filed continue to rise, which he said is a good thing that shows a "vote of confidence" in the Army and its leaders. He added "we want reporting to go up and incidents to go down." He said the largest increase is in reports of male-on-male assaults.

"Only 12 percent of them felt they could come forward. That means we literally have thousands of male Soldiers in our organizations who are living lives of desperation because they don't think the SHARP program is for them," Catlett said. "We've got to talk to our male Soldiers about this. We've got to acknowledge that it happens; we have to open the response system and speak to them so they can come forward and be heard and to be treated, and, God willing, go from victim to survivor."

A sexual assault survivor shared her story in hopes of giving senior leaders insight to the important role they play in the reporting and recovery processes.

"You never know who the victim is. We are all around you, and you never know who your assailant is, they are people you would never, ever suspect," she said. "I hope this has helped you realize that we are all around you. That we do exist and that it's very hard at times to wear this uniform."

Maj. Gen. Kent Savre, Maneuver Support Center of Excellence and Fort Leonard Wood commanding general, addressed those in attendance, telling them to think as if this were their son or daughter and stressed how important it is to teach young Soldiers right from wrong.

"Here at Fort Leonard Wood, we're in the business of bringing new people into the Army from across America. We do have to help people understand what right and wrong is," Savre said. "Most importantly, we have to have all of our Soldiers, male and female, believe they can reach out to somebody. That if something happens to them, they trust their chain of command. Only we can provide that trust."

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender

integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.