CREATING A STRONGER MILITARY FAMILY

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors Committee of Texas State University-San Marcos in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

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CREATING A STRONGER MILITARY FAMILY

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This project is dedicated to every soldier who has served, or is currently serving, as well as to the family members of these soldiers. You all are brave, the true heroes of this Nation.

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I. Introduction:

I have chosen to write my thesis in a form of a proposal in order to help the families of Fort Hood. Being a future Army officer, I plan on having my own family one day. I want a program in place to help military families grow stronger with each other, so that when I leave to go serve my country, the experiences and memories I have had with them will resonate throughout my absence. Because of deployment, military families are separated for long lengths of time. PTSD, anxiety, and many other issues arise because of things like combat stress, and these problems could lead to a division of a family along with potential psychological disorders (Tanielian, 2008). Specifically at Ft. Hood, the "Family Readiness Groups" are not effective, and the MWR Programs are the primary aid for families on the base (Stogner, Personal Communication.). I have a passion for family. I have created something that is focused on the children of these families; this allows military families to become closer as a whole, to develop stronger relationships with each other in order to be successful and happy as a military family. My proposal is to create an annual camping trip that would create high morale and good memories for the families of Ft. Hood. This gives families opportunities to create a stronger family unit, and in turn, creating a stronger soldier. It is my opinion that the families would be interested in this because of the fun and bonding aspect of the camp. This trip would help create an opportunity for a family to grow closer with each other as well as generate an unforgettable experience.

II. Background

The Army system can be difficult to maneuver through. The stress of possibly losing a life, and the constant traveling and change of location, all can put unnecessary wear and tear on a family. Some of the effects of deployment on the families and children are separation anxiety, behavior problems in small children, along with eating disorders and acting out ("How Deployment," 2009). These are just a few of the vast areas of behaviors which can be affected during this time. It is crucial that these families have an outlet in which to be able to get back to normal in their lives. In my own opinion, most children have negative experiences because of their parents who are left behind and are at home while the soldier is deployed. Most parents who are at home during this time have emotional and physical disorders, causing the children to have some of the same effects ("How Deployment," 2009). Deployment is a necessary part of military life, and it comes with many benefits, not only for the soldier, who has a calling to be a part of something greater than self, but also for the country in which he or she is diligent in serving. Being in a military family is also very challenging with numerous deployments, which can be for up to a year at a time.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a reaction to trauma, and many other mental and physical problems are frequent among military soldiers (Tanielian, 2008). Although it is least likely for anyone under 20 years of age to have PTSD, Studies have found that returning soldiers are prone to not only PTSD, but also issues such as depression, anxiety, brain injuries and many other concerns (Tanielian, 2008). Eighty percent of veterans with PTSD are interested in their families being a part of their

rehabilitation, and are looking for ways to involve others to help them. PTSD is often not very well understood by family members when a soldier returns from war, and the effects can be long lasting, with moods, behavior and thoughts being disrupted along with medical and financial needs far exceeding the soldier's income and ability to take care of it (Tanielian, 2008). This in turn places a tremendous amount of anxiety on not only the soldier, but on the family as well. Economic, social and emotional health is at stake, and each soldier has different needs for their individual case. Treating the issues early can help keep them from impairment in their lives with regard to their daily living and future deployment (Tanielian, 2008). Individually, post care cost for PTSD for two years can be more than \$10,000 in health care costs. This condition can affect health, future productivity and relationships with people around them. Of these, over 57% have not sought help from a physician or doctor in the past year. There are short and long term consequences for any soldier with PTSD or any other mental illness post deployment (Tanielian, 2008). This is a serious issue, and people are affected by deployment and the absence of their families in their lives, regardless of the psychological disorders.

The Army has programs in place to help families get prepared for a deployment. But not every base is the same, and Ft. Hood, in my opinion, seems left out when it comes to the programs available to the families. I found two programs in place at Ft. Hood to help with family services. One is called the Family Readiness Group. "The Family Readiness Group (FRG) is an officially command-sponsored organization of family members, volunteers, and soldiers belonging to a unit, that together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communications among the family members, the chain of command, and community resources. FRG's help create a climate of mutual

support within the unit and community. Basic FRG goals include supporting the military mission through the provision of support, outreach, and information to family members. FRGs play an integral part in the Family and Soldier Readiness System (FSRS)" ("Family Readiness," 2010). The Family Readiness Group is available on bases worldwide and can be available to every unit. Ft. Hood specifically uses it to help families get ready for deployment and to help families cope.

There are some issues with this system however. Steven Stogner, Staff Sergeant for the U.S Army, also a soldier who lived at Ft. Hood for three years explained to me how the Family Readiness Group (FRG) helped his family before and after deployment. He stated that his biggest issue with this group is that this program is geared solely towards the spouse of the soldier. Being that this is the main program in place at Ft. hood for them to use, the children get left out when it comes to becoming emotionally ready for their mother or father to leave for an extended period of time. "I had to do all of the work in getting my children ready for their daddy to leave. The Army does provide programs to help us adults, but at Ft. Hood it was all left up to me to make sure my kids didn't have emotional issues when I left. How am I supposed to make my three year old daughter understand what it is that daddy does and why I have to leave for such a long time? I had a tough time with that. Sometimes I didn't know the right words to say and being a young father, I had to make my own ways to show her" (Stogner, personal communication). Also, the FRG is structured just like an Army unit. For example, the platoon leader of any unit is in charge of the platoon sergeant of that unit. But the platoon sergeant has much more experience in the Army and with getting ready for deployments. A platoon leader is the first rank that one holds as an officer, these men and women are

usually no more than 23 years old coming out of college or the Academy with no army experience. A platoon sergeant is one of the highest ranking enlisted soldiers of any platoon. In order to be a platoon sergeant one must be in the army for 10 plus years. Considering that the FRG is run completely by the wives of the unit, this system does not always work out as well as it can. Imagine the wife of the platoon leader for a unit trying to get the Platoon Sergeants family ready for deployment. This platoon sergeant and his wife have probably gone through multiple deployments already. It is the platoon leader's wife that should be getting guidance from the platoon sergeant's wife however, the program is structured the opposite way. "Sometimes the women would butt heads because of the difference in rank structure. Some women felt that they should not be talked down to or to be lead by younger inexperienced wives. It just did not seem right to some, how this program was run, so many of them did not participate in it' (Stogner, personal communication). In turn, the children were affected because resources were not used effectively to help the families cope with a deployment. Knowing that, the Family Readiness Group in my opinion has failed to most successfully accomplish their object.

The next program I found was the Moral, Welfare, & Recreation group (MWR). The "Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, the G9 division of the Army's Installation Management Command, is a comprehensive network of quality support and leisure services that enhances the lives of Soldiers, Civilians, Families, military retirees and other eligible participants" (MWR website). In short, this is a program that provides a basic menu of services to families at any base. If one were to Google MWR for their perspective base, the first thing that would come up is the website for that program. What this site does is list dates of different events that the base is having. This website can even

be used as a travel agency to find discount travel arrangements. The MWR is a good program if you want to find cheap concert tickets, but it doesn't focus on helping the entire family unit.

This camp I am proposing will be vital to military families and will do two things for the betterment of them. One is to allow the families to bond with one another before deployment so they can interact with one another and other military families. This creates that unity and kinship to be able to encourage and uplift one another while the soldiers are deployed. Activities include camping, rock climbing, hiking, fishing, and family cook outs will be provided by the camp so that each family attending will be better prepared for the absence of their family members for the short or long term. The other reason this camp will be important is that it will be used post deployment, so that the families can get reacquainted with a close interaction and bonding with one another through various activities they will do together and with other families of post deployment.

Ft. Hood is the single largest military installation in the country according to the U.S census of 2010, there are 33,711 people, 5,819 households, and 5,679 families residing in the CDP. The population density was 2,255.7 people per square mile (870.6/km²). There were 5,941 housing units at an average density of 397.5 per square mile (153.4/km²). The racial makeup of the CDP was 50.7% White, 31.6% African American, 1.2% Native American, 2.1% Asian, 0.8% Pacific Islander, 8.7% from other races, and 4.8% from two or more races. The average household size was 3.92 and the average family size was 3.95 (U.S Census). Based on the personal experiences of Mr.

Stogner and the programs available, my main target audience is the kids at Ft. Hood, specifically kids 18 and under. The Census reports that there are 4,916 families with children 18 and under. These are the families that will be eligible to go on the trip. I want to focus the trip on the kids because the programs available at Ft. Hood aren't focused on the children there.

III. Purpose, & Audience

The purpose of this proposal will be to strengthen the families of Ft. Hood by enlightening them with a new option for Military family building. As demonstrated previously, Ft. Hood is in need of a trip like this to consistently bring families together. Betty Schacht, the enrollment manager for Camp Cheley who is responsible for getting children and families into the camp stated that "There has been nothing focused towards the Army at their camp. They have a proctor (also known as an agreement) with the Air Force and their families that they participate in every year but none with the Army" (Schacht, personal communication.). Considering that I will be in that position of being a father and husband in the military, it is only natural for me to want to help other people in this field. Do not get me wrong, the two programs I listed before are amazing services that the Army provides, I just want this camp to be an addition to these programs at Ft. Hood.

My main target audience is the children of these military families at Ft. Hood.

Also previously demonstrated, the children seem like the missing puzzle piece in this in regards to coping with deployments and becoming stronger as a family unit.

The format I have chosen for this will be a project proposal. This being because it will be up to the command of the base to allow the families and military members to go

on a trip like this. I am setting up this proposal in a form of a brochure to give to the families on the base. The brochure is geared towards family fun, and has mostly pictures of kids doing activities to spark even more interest from the children. These brochures will be handed out in the schools of the surrounding area, in the malls, and even the grocery stores on the base. Posters will also be available for viewing in these areas as to get as much publicity as possible to the families. The format of the trip will be mostly tailored to the kids, but also provide comfort to the adults relaying a good experience for the families as a whole that will be attending. I picked this format because I felt as if the kids will react better to visual stimulation with the posters, and also will remember the trip better if they can have something to touch like the brochures. Also, I can remember back to my elementary school days when I took everything my teacher said as gold. I want to use this idea and have the teachers in each individual classroom on base make an announcement to the students about the trip to Camp Cheley. They would be handing out the brochures at this time and this will hopefully get back to the house. Or at least put the idea in their mind about the trip to the camp. This will not cover the kids that go to school outside the base but those kids will be in the stores on base. Or at least their parents will be, thus relaying that information to them in order to get them on board for the trip.

After the trip is over, I have created a survey for the families on the base to report about the effects of the trip on the family. It is only 10 questions, but this survey would help me to see if the families became closer after the trip and to see if the trip was beneficial to the families. During the trip I would be getting the addresses of the household for each family so I could mail them the survey, and they could return it to a mail box that I would set up through the U.S. Postal Service. My idea is to mail the

survey out to the families one to two months after the trip, because this will give the families enough time to see the effects of the memories made on the trip and the effects of the bonding experiences that they had at Camp Cheley.

IV. Inspiration through school

As a General Studies major student for Texas State University, I chose three minors to complete my degree. My three minors are Military Science, Honors, and Leadership studies. These three minors have inspired me to write this thesis. My Military Science course has taught me everything from learning how to knock out a bunker, how to search an enemy prisoner of war, and what it means to be a part of a military family. The latter topic has stuck with me most throughout my Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) career because having a family is very important to me. There was a day in class that we turned into sort of an informal discussion about being a husband and a father on active duty. My instructor at the time taught us from his point of view, the difference between a civilian family and a military family, as well as the issues and the differences of how to handle those between civilian and military life. A civilian family has to worry about bills, they may even have to deal with the absence of a travelling worker. A military family however has to cope with the fact that their mother or father is risking their lives to serve their country. I remember raising my hand and asking my instructor if it was difficult to be a military dad. He told me that it was very difficult. This one class discussion has stuck with me and has also inspired me to create the topic that I have to better military families in the long run. I get to interact with fathers and husbands of the U.S. Army every single day because of my Military Science course.

Being that the families going on this trip are all military and also being that they are all from Ft. Hood, these families will be able to relate to each other on a deeper level and will also be able to share their experiences with their fellow base families. There's nothing in the curriculum that tells you how to be a good father or how to hold a military family together. But the more time I spend with these men, the more I have learned and the more I am soaking in for when I am put in their position.

My second minor is Honors. This minor has opened a new world to what an institution of higher learning entails. I have taken courses that range from finding the quest for the meaning of life all the way to the problem of evil and if God really exists. The Honors program has provided such a diverse environment. The people and the classes have never been the same and I have learned something new every step of the way. Professor John Hood has been one of the most inspirational professors I have had the pleasure to learn from since I have been at Texas State. I took a class in the Honors program called 'The Art of Story-Telling' taught by Mr. Hood. This class taught me to come out of my shell and talk with people that I normally wouldn't converse with. The class allowed the students involved to find commonalities between each other. Every week we came into class and told each other stories of what we did the past week, and every week I got a different reaction. Some classes were sad, some were happy. But we all learned how to develop intelligent conversation between complete strangers. I got the idea that this concept could be directly applied to my proposal in great success. Considering that the families at Ft. Hood obviously already had something in common, it would be much easier and beneficial to share each other's stories at Camp Cheley. There is an activity on the agenda that is basically a time for conversation and storytelling between the families. Whether it is from a child or a parent's point of view, these families will be able to share each other's experiences and share what they have had to go through in being a military family. Hopefully, this will create an even closer bond between not only within the families themselves, but between everybody on the base of Ft. Hood.

My third minor is Leadership Studies. This minor was all about communication, and most of the classes I took were communication based classes. There was a progression of sorts in starting with the introduction to communication course, and graduating with my current class that I am taking this semester Leadership and Communication. This was one of the many classes I took for this minor, and I see it being useful to this proposal. One of the concepts we learned in this class is the idea of shared meaning. Shared meaning definition states that "Each stakeholder in the conversation shares what is meaningful to them as it pertains to creating the desired future those in the conversation are seeking to create and getting proper feedback from the individuals of an organization". There would be no point in making a proposal like this if it did not fix a problem or help some people along the way as the end result. I want to take this concept of shared meaning and apply it through the advertisement of the camp I am sending the families of Ft. Hood to. I am going to make a survey asking the families how they viewed the trip and if it helped cope with a pre or post deployment soldier. I want to see if the brochures and the posters worked in getting their attention for the trip, as well as allow the families to make a general comment about anything regarding Camp Cheley and future trips like the one I am creating. This survey will be given after the camp as to get

some feedback directly from the audience I am targeting thus applying this concept of shared communication to better programs and camps like mine in the future.

V. Potential Problems and Solutions

The main problem I had while working on this proposal was gathering specific enough information about the families at Ft. Hood. The demographics seemed hard to find in regards to getting down to the minuscule details of each family. I ran into some issues when calling Ft. Hood as well. One problem was that, every person I called was so busy that I got put on hold about twenty times and then the call would just hang up. I became frustrated and basically gave up on this process in trying to contact officials at the base in charge of family facilities and information. I instead, decided to go straight to the soldiers. I got into contact with Staff Sergeant Steven Stogner, a soldier who lived at Ft. Hood for three years, gave me more information than I could want. Mr. Stogner let me into the mind of a soldier that has been on deployment like he has, and gave me information on where I could find demographic information on the base. He directed me towards the U.S Census, which I had never thought of or thought to use before he told me. I gained insight into an overall look at what the population of Ft. Hood looks likes from the view of the families. Overall, I ended up using the information based on the U.S. Census to gather my information as accurately as possible.

Another problem I came into contact with is fundraising. I wanted this trip to hold little or no cost to the families of Ft. Hood. After countless amounts of research and a lot of thought I found that this just wasn't possible. I did not have enough time for one to find charities that would donate enough to cover the cost of the trip. Also, it seemed more

themselves. My solution to this issue is to present the idea of fundraising for the families to accomplish themselves. The kids could have an enormous bake sale or car wash, as well as ask for donations by their own means and this could be done throughout the year as many times as they wanted in order to raise money. In my opinion this seems like the best route. This would also help lower the amount of people going to the camp at one time. Even though it is possible, I wouldn't want to over load Camp Cheley with thousands of people for just one weekend. It would be great if all of the families at Ft. Hood to go, but that's not really the goal of my proposal. If this camp can change the dynamic of just one family unit for the better, in my eyes this will satisfy its purpose.

Flying will be the means of transportation to and from Camp Cheley and these costs will be the cheapest means of transportation as well. This trip will be an annual event so if a family cannot go one year, they could spend the year fundraising and saving money to go the next time. This will give kids something to look forward to, and hopefully take their minds off of the fact that their parent may leave at any moment. These kids and the families will not only hopefully make this trip a tradition, but remember this trip for the rest of their lives.

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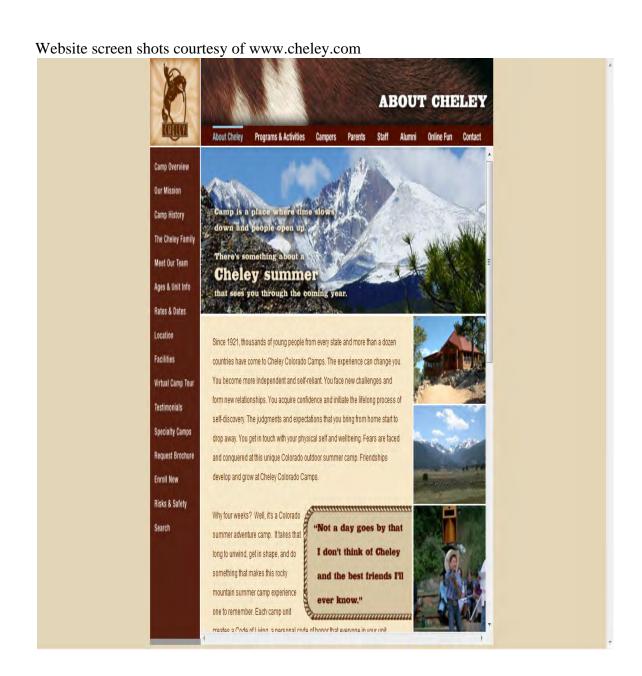
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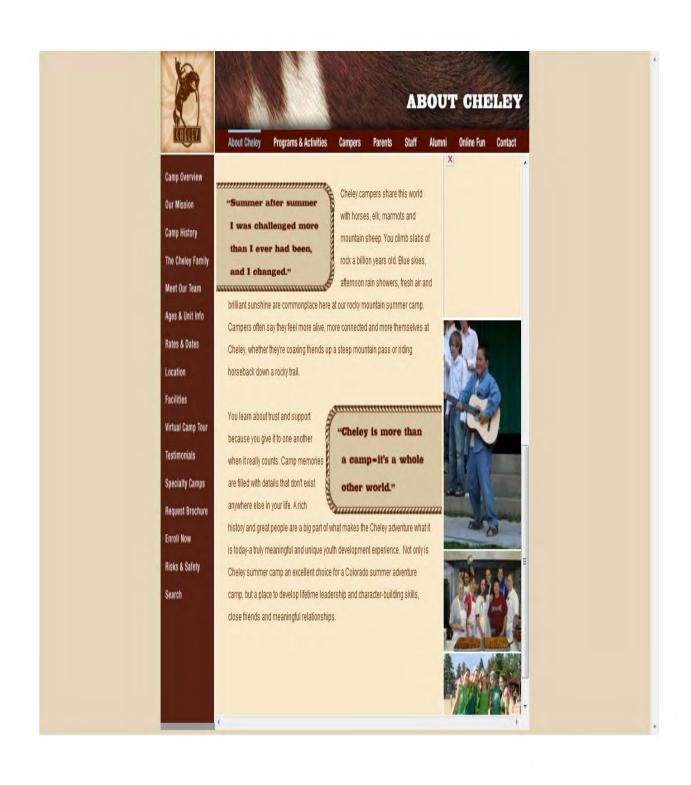
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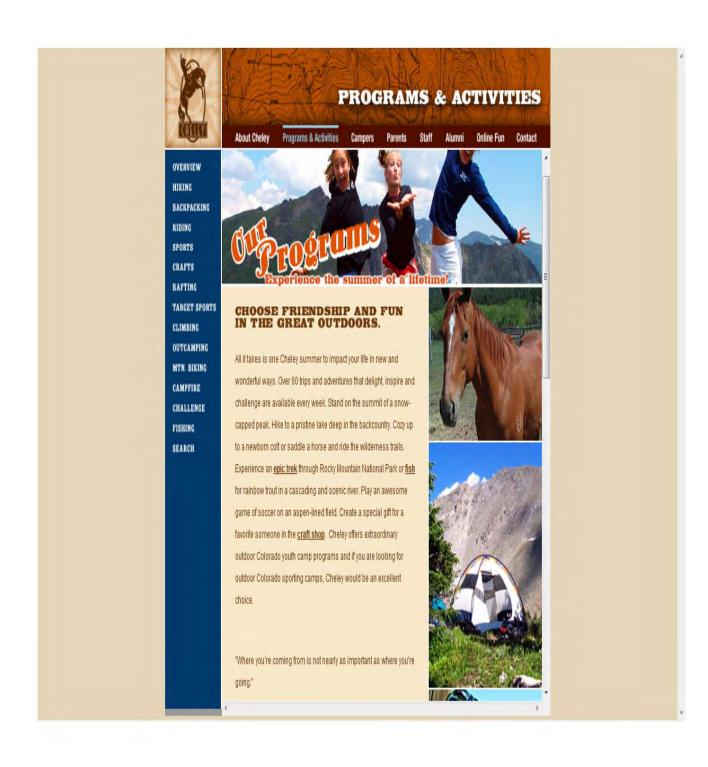
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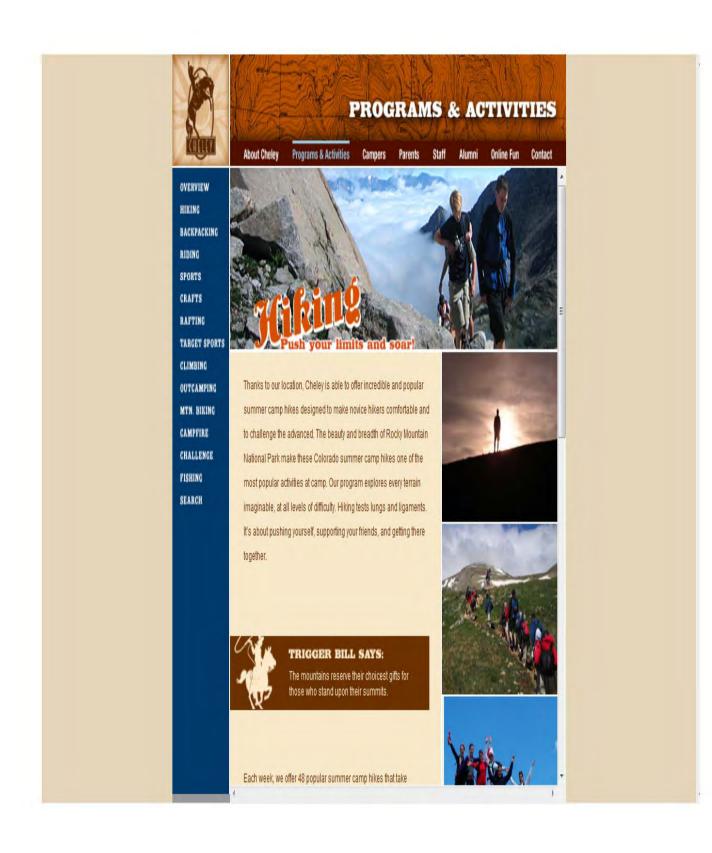
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PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

About Cheley

Programs & Activities Campers Parents Staff

Alumni Online Fun Contact

OVERVIEW HIKING

BACKPACKING

RIDING SPORTS

CRAFTS

RAFTING

TARGET SPORTS CLIMBING

OUTCAMPING MTN BIKING

CAMPFIRE

CHALLENGE FISHING SEARCH

Each week, we offer 48 popular summer camp hikes that take campers to gulches, saddles, mountaintops and pristine lakes. We go to places like Mount Lady Washington, Andrews Tarn and Chasm Falls, and to lakes with names like Haiyaha, Odessa, Fern, Lily and Blue. If you love the natural beauty of the outdoors, Cheley is the perfect summer camp for hikers.



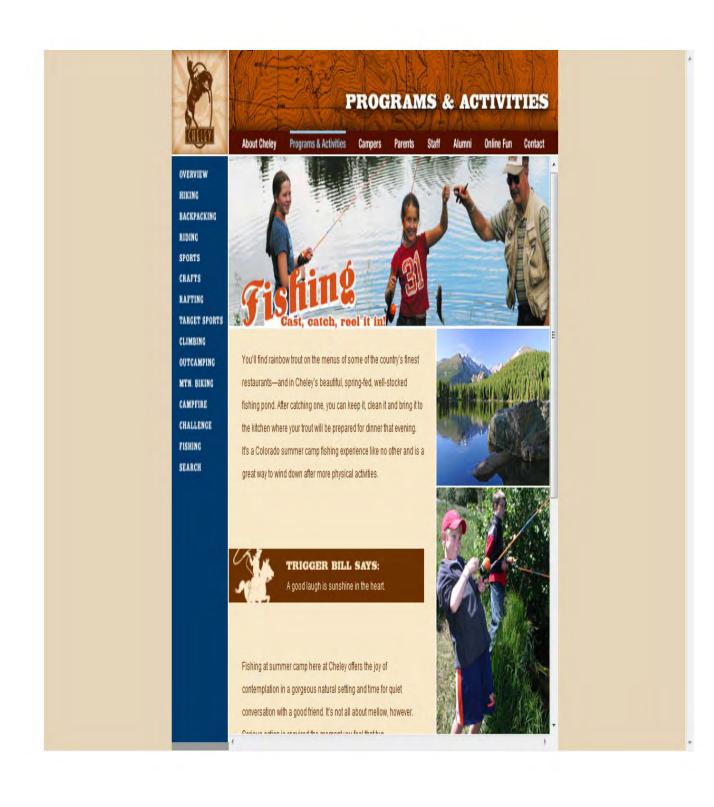
Available to the experienced hiker, Longs Peak at 14,255 feet is one of the highest

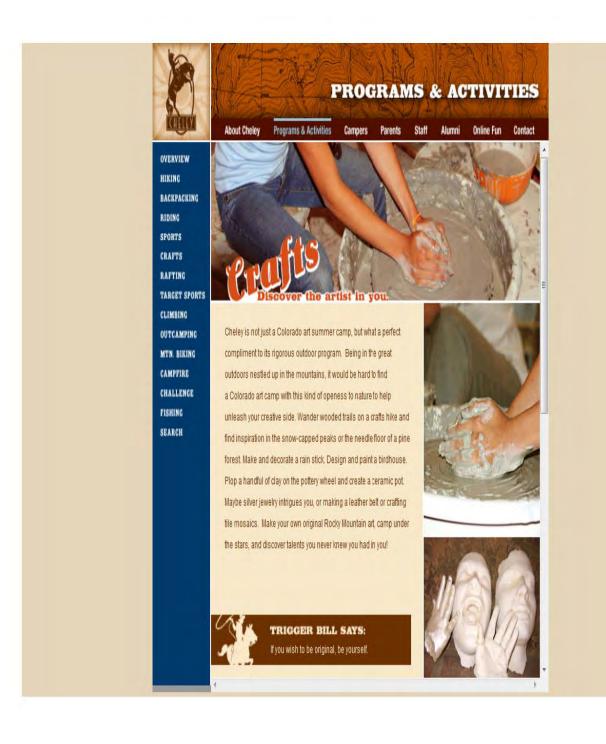
and most awe-inspiring

..... Cheley is a chance to push yourself, whether it's getting over a fear of horses or peaking a mountain with a group of friends. -James, Cheley camper

Barananananana peaks in North America. The trek takes you eight miles up a wooded trail, over the boulder field, through the keyhole, across the ledge, with foot-to-hand holds the final 500 feet while pausing to catch your breath every few steps. Not only is this a popular Colorado summer camp hike, people from all over the world enjoy the most challenging nontechnical hike in Colorado. That last tired step takes you onto a peak the size of a football field and just as flat, making Longs a journey no hiker forgets. Cheley is not just a summer camp for hikers, but if you are into hiking, we promise you an unforgettable journey.











Biographies And Contributors

Steven Stogner

SSG/ USA

Cell: 512-422-7301

steven.stogner@aol.com

Steven Stogner entered Active duty Army in Sep 1997 as a cannon

crewmember. He then was Stationed in Bamberg Germany from 1997-2000. During that

time he deployed to Kosovo in 1999. He then moved to Fort Sill, Ok 2000-2002 in which

there he was the Howitzer Gun Chief. He spent 4 years as a police officer in the state of

Oklahoma and reentered service as a Cavalry Scout in 2006. He Attended Airborne

School and got stationed at Fort Bragg with the 82nd Airborne Division. Soon after, he

deployed to Iraq for 15 months with Joint Special Operations Command and attended

Jumpmaster and the Pathfinder course for the U.S Army. He then moved to Fort Hood in

2010 where he lived and deployed to Afghanistan soon after. He was wounded in action

2011and became Set for medical retirement 2012.

Military Awards Include:

Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal. Army Commendation Medal,

Army Achievement medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal,

Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal,

Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terror Medal, Armed Forces Service

Medal, NCOPD Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Senior Parachutist

Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Combat action Badge, German Parachutist

Wings, Valorous Unit Award.

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Betty Schacht Enrollment Manager Cheley Colorado Camps 303-377-3616 (Winter) 970-586-4244 (Summer)

Betty Schacht, the Enrollment Manager for Cheley Colorado Camps was the contact I used to get the information I needed specifically for the Camp itself. At first, I wasn't sure if Camp Cheley was the place that I wanted to host my project but she explained to me the situation that the camp has had previously. She stated that the camp held a proctor with Air Force families but had nothing with the Army. She explained that an average of 150 kids and their parents showed up to this camp for the Air Force every year and was glad to see that I was creating an idea like that for the Army. She deals with getting kids and families into the camp and mailed me an entire packet filled with information about this subject. Betty has been in this position four years and is working to make Camp Cheley a better place every single day. Her educational accomplishments include an undergraduate as well as a graduate degree in Accounting and Tax Law from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

WE HOPE YOU HAD FUN!

Please take a couple minutes to answer a few questions about your experience at Camp Cheley. Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. This will help future trips and families to have the most amount of fun as possible!

| 1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how was your overall experience at Camp Cheley? |
|--|
| 2. Would you and your family want to go on this trip next year? |
| 3. Was the trip at an affordable price for your family? |
| 4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how good was your family's overall relationship before the trip? |
| 5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how good is your overall family relationship now? |
| 6. What was your favorite/least favorite activity at Camp Cheley? |
| 7. Would you like to see this camp advertised in other Army bases in the U.S? Yes or No |
| 8. What military family programs would you like to see at Ft. Hood? List 2 or 3. |
| 9. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well did you like the advertising for the camp? |
| 10. What was the best thing you learned at Camp Cheley? |

CAMP CHELEY

Come and make memories that will last a life time!

Ft. Hood Family Summer Camp!!!!!

Families at Ft. Hood, come experience the beautiful outdoors in the wonderful mountains of Colorado for a trip
that will be unforgettable! Starting next summer, Camp
Cheley, a camp that is packed with fun activities for family members of all ages is inviting the families of Ft. Hood
to come and really see what its like to be on top of the
world! Contact Anson Blackall, project manager for the
camp for more details, or contact Camp Cheley and the
staff would love to assist you. Summer is just around the
corner, make it one to remember!



CAMP CHELEY

Colorado USA

Information: 972-948-8207

Camp: 800-226-7386

E-mail: ab1823@txstate.edu



Budget for Camp Cheley

| Revenue | 8 yrs and older | | Under 8 yrs | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--|
| Bake Sale | \$ | 400.00 | | \$400.00 | |
| | | | | | |
| Cupcake Sale Price - \$2.00 | | | | | |
| Based on the estimated sale of 200 Cupcakes | | person | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Total Revenue | \$ | 400.00 | \$ | 400.00 | |
| | | | | | |
| Tuition cost | 8 yr | s and older | Un | der 8 yrs | |
| Camp fee | \$ | 800.00 | \$ | 500.00 | |
| Air fare | \$ | 336.00 | \$ | 336.00 | |
| Ground Trans. Midsize | \$ | 415.00 | \$ | 415.00 | |
| Bake Sale Fundraiser | | | | | |
| Cake mix - 9 bx@ 1.98 | \$ | 17.82 | | | |
| Icing - 7 cans @ 2.29 | \$ | 16.03 | | | |
| Cupcake tins - 3 pkg of 100 | \$ | 4.50 | | | |
| Cake mix ingredients | \$ | 5.00 | | | |
| Poster Board-2 for Signs | \$ | 6.50 | | | |
| Paint/Brushes | \$ | 12.00 | | | |
| Markers | \$ | 7.00 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Total Cost | \$ | 1,619.85 | \$ | 1,251.00 | |
| Bake Sale Revenue | | (\$400.00) | | (\$400.00) | |
| | | \$1,219.85 | | \$851.00 | |
| | | | | | |