

By Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

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## BOSS starts program with local school

BOSS spends time with students.

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Four soldiers from Fort Leavenworth's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program visited David Brewer Elementary School in Leavenworth Nov. 14 to start a new mentoring program initiative targeted to serve school-aged students in the area.

"This is a brand new initiative at our school," said Lesley Morey, school counselor. "We decided over the summer that we wanted to have more positive mentor influence involvement at David J. Brewer. We contacted the BOSS organization and asked if they wanted to connect with our school. The idea is to have soldiers come in and visit with our students, read to classes, interact with students during recess and share knowledge as mentors."

The mission of BOSS is based on three pillars — community involvement, quality of life and organized recreational activities. BOSS plans different activities throughout the year to support these pillars, including an Angel Tree, community council meetings, themed parties, lake trips, snow skiing, road side clean up and fundraisers.

Pfc. Stephanie Jackson, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Military Police Battalion (Detention), is originally from Chino, Calif., and has been president of BOSS since October. She said the group of visiting soldiers would be engaged in various activities with students at the school for the entire morning.

"Some of our organizational goals are first to maintain the current number of volunteers we now have, and then to grow our membership by getting more soldiers involved," Jackson said. "Outreach initiatives like this one are important. We want to also serve our off-post communities. Each of us is looking forward to working with the students and will even stay to eat lunch with them before we go."

BOSS soldiers talked about the benefits of having professional soldiers volunteering to serve in the communities near their military post.

"I originally got involved with BOSS to just get out into the community, do constructive things and make friends," said Spc. Rachel Thorpe, of Carmichael, Calif., who is currently assigned with Company C, 308th Military Intelligence Battalion, 902nd MI Group.

Spc. Benjamin Watts, vice president of the BOSS program and a radiology specialist at Munson Army Health Center is from Atlanta and said he joined BOSS to get involved in community service.

"We do lots of work in the community and on post. So, we wanted to work with Ms. Morey and the administrators here by mentoring and helping out in any way we could," Watts said.

Spc. Elliot Robinson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, has only been in the service for 18 months. Also from Atlanta, Robinson said he enjoys participating in BOSS for the volunteer opportunities that allow him to interact constructively with the elementary students as a mentor.

"As an active-duty soldier, it is not only important to provide service at the federal level, but to also provide service at the local level in communities where we live," Robinson said. "This program helps ensure that our presence is known to our fellow citizens in other positive ways besides the obvious primary military mission of national defense we all have as soldiers."

The first stop for the BOSS soldiers inside the school was the fourth-grade classroom of Debbie Crabill, who asked each soldier to share an example of a patriotic tradition.

"Our students are a learning community," Crabill said. "Having the BOSS soldiers help us reinforce something like the reasons we say the Pledge of Allegiance each morning helps our students develop an understanding and perspective that enhances their comprehension of the meaning of those words. It also helps put the reasons we willingly show such respect into objective context."

More information about the program is available by contacting BOSS at the Resiliency Center, 600 Thomas Avenue, (913) 684-1703. Also visit the BOSS page online at the FMWR website at <http://fortleavenworthfmwr.com/index.php/recreation/better-opportunities-for-single-soldiers-boss>.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers members Spc. Rachel Thorpe, Charlie Company, 308th Military Intelligence Battalion, and Spc. Elliot Robinson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, work on leadership-themed drawings with fifth-graders Bailey Reese, Meah Hansen and Elijon Banks during art class Nov. 14 at David Brewer Elementary School in Leavenworth. BOSS members conducted their first military mentorship program visit Nov. 14, with monthly visits expected to follow. Soldiers participated in classes with the children, played with them on the playground and answered their questions about being a soldier. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

