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Gavin MacRoberts

Soldier gets 'army' of volunteers

FAYETTEVILLE -- Cumberland County, Fayetteville and neighboring cities are recruiting an army of volunteers to help the thousands of soldiers transferring to Fort Bragg. The program is called the "Army's Army."

It will match city and county residents with soldiers and their families who are looking for information on the community. More than 25,000 soldiers and their families are expected to move into the counties surrounding Fort Bragg over the next 5 years. That's because the base realignment and closure plan, or the BRAC plan, has called for a number of base changes.

Wendy Dyer remembers hearing the nickname "Fayette'nam" and the bad reputation that went along with it when she moved to Fayetteville in 2003, but she says that reputation has sort of faded away over the last few years.

"I think of horrible things [when I hear that,] but I haven't heard of Fayette'nam since 2005, 2006," she said.

After moving to Fayetteville, Dyer said she discovered there was more to the community than the reputation. Now she wants others to know the same. She is one of a number of volunteers signing up for the Army's Army to help the thousands of soldiers and their families moving into the area.

The mission for the volunteers is to act as a liaison between the soldiers and the community to let them know what the city and the county have to offer.

Pam Sise came to the county as a military spouse and now works as a volunteer. She said having a local connection makes the move to a new military base easier.

"[It makes it go] very smoothly, knowing with having a sponsor, knowing what to expect when we go to the next post from a family perspective," Sise said.

Jim Konneker, the Army's Army commander, hopes the friendly faces of the volunteer group will attract soldiers looking for a supportive community.

"This community, more so than any other community in the world, we welcome, appreciate and support our military neighbors."

"I think we have outlived that [Fayette'nam] name and Fayetteville the Beautiful is the new name," Dyer added.

