

Hohenfels offering one-stop 'Welcome' at Bldg. 10

Story and photo by
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Travel-weary newcomers to U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels will be met by knowledgeable personnel who will direct them to lodging and get them on a smooth start in their new assignment.

The cornerstone of the garrison's efforts begins in the newly renovated Bldg. 10 with the relocation of some services in the facility.

Much of the new construction has been designed for the relocation of a number of Soldier and family service programs.

Army Community Service, SATO Travel Services, Child Liaison Education and Outreach Services, Family Child Care, and the Yellow Ribbon Room are now in Bldg. 10 along with a large group of existing services all under one roof.

"You might say Bldg. 10 is the face of Hohenfels," said Gerry Ragle, the human resources director.

With the addition of a second, often late-arriving, Hohenfels sponsorship bus, the building is the first place new arrivals see, he said.

The Army has mandated that Soldiers and family members will arrive at their home station the same day they arrive in Europe. To make that happen, the central processing facility insures that every S-bus, regardless of when it arrives, is met by staff members to welcome the newcomers to the community.

Practically speaking, a one-stop 'shopping' welcome center is shaping up with dozens of people ready to make the transition to and living in Hohenfels easier and more fulfilling than ever before.

Newcomers entering Bldg. 10 will find a large, comfortable lobby and a coffee shop—Brew in the Box, which is open to all community members.

"We're excited to be into a larger location so near to the in-processing point, allowing us immediate access to Soldiers and families to provide services, assess needs, and introduce all of our programs," said Trevor Jackman, ACS division chief.

With the recently announced Army Family Assistance budget request increase—from \$100

million to \$1.4 billion—the closer proximity and easy access to Bldg. 10 for Soldiers, family members, and civilians to ACS and other service provider programs should improve usage.

"What we offer is 'if you have a family related issue', we help you solve it," said Brandi Stauber, ACS Family Advocacy Program manager. "Our goal is to decrease family stress by connecting families with the resources they need."

One longtime Bldg. 10 service provider is U. S. Forces Customs Europe, better known as



Michelle Martinez is one of the many service provider employees at Hohenfels' newly renovated Bldg. 10 "Welcome Center."

the customs office. Chief Customs Supervisor Robert Torkildson sees the purpose of his office as one of customer service.

"We help people understand. Keep them informed," Torkildson said.

He said that often people can be defensive when dealing with his office mostly because they are not properly informed about the technical nature of the various rules that govern U.S. forces living in Germany that are spelled out in the Status of Forces Agreement.

"It's all about taxes and money," Torkildson said.

The \$2,500 financial limit on a Value Added Tax form is a good example, he said. If the customer has a need over that amount, it is not possible to use two forms to cover it. Yet there are VAT solutions for higher amounts. Torkildson recommends stopping by his office and beginning with the facts. It could save time and money.

On the subject of saving money, the ACS Financial Readiness Program provides advice, programs, seminars and workshops on every aspect of your financial life.

"Money is the number one reason married couples argue. It's our job to make sure everyone on the Hohenfels post realizes there are confidential resources to help them past almost any issue successfully," said Amy Bernath, Financial

Readiness Program manager. "So whether it's about savings, credit problems, budgets, retirement or anything else financial, ACS offers workshops or private consultations that will provide options that maybe you've never realized were there."

One of the first issues anyone newly arrived has is the need to move around. Enter the Transportation Office which can and will handle basically any issue dealing with the buying, selling and registration of an automobile smoothly and quickly.

Eight-year Transportation Office veteran Claudia Brown said that her job can be exhausting due to the occasional irate customer and the mountains of paperwork.

"Maybe once a week I want to quit, but really I like my job," Brown said noting the long time 'free screwdriver rental' to replace license plates is always well received. All questions about owning automobiles at Hohenfels are welcome.

If you didn't bring your car with you, you will want to purchase one and that takes money. The most efficient method to get money is to earn it. That means finding a job. And the best way to learn about employment options and opportunities in Hohenfels is through the Employment Readiness Program at ACS.

Workshops such as Federal Resume Preparation, Employment 101 and Interviewing Tips are a sampling of what is available. Personal consultations are another method of becoming familiar with the employment scene on post.

Child and Youth Services Liaison, Education and Outreach Services, or CLEOS, is another new arrival settling in to their renovated offices.

"This is a much better location to serve customers," said Shawna Baudoux, CLEOS administrative clerk. She said their new offices should offer an immediate opportunity for new families to find out about the extensive services available.

CLEOS administers many family friendly programs including a variety of child care options such as hourly, half day and full day care as well as before and after school supervision through the Child Development Center and School Age Services. Youth sports, summer activities, homework assistance, and music lessons are among many other programs CLEOS has available for Hohenfels families.

The New Parent Support Program at ACS provides help for couples expecting a child or with young children. The primary vehicle is individual home visits from program coordinator Laura Knarr, a registered nurse.

"We have found parents enjoy the convenience of a personalized program being offered in the comfort of their own home," said

Knarr who has nine years of nursing experience. "Once the expectant couple or new parents realize they can get good advice in a really comfortable environment, it works."

Romana Widl, the branch manager for SATO Travel, is happy about the layout of their new office. The professional configuration provides a waiting area just outside the main office that allows for private or sensitive travel plans to be reviewed in a more controlled environment.

"Customer service is number one with us," Widl said. "We as a staff are always eager to search for the cheapest available fare or offer for any kind of travel option."

Hallo Hohenfels is the five-day newcomers' orientation presented 11 months of the year by the Relocation Readiness Program at ACS in the conference room in Bldg. 10.

"This is a fun program for anyone who wants a comprehensive course on Hohenfels in one smooth dose," said program manager Precilla Tolbert. Included are a personal welcome by the garrison commander or command sergeant major; two sessions of "Survival German," several shopping trips to a mall in Regensburg and a home furnishing store in Parsberg, and a lunch at a local Gasthaus, among many other interesting features.

The Transportation Office is really the poster child of coming to and leaving Hohenfels. They are in charge of moving essential material possessions; irreplaceable items that make your family unique—your home furnishings.

Gaby Kotzbauer, transportation assistant, said shipments to Hohenfels are arranged by a company in the States while PCS moves are coordinated by the booking office in Grafenwoehr. "That's why we're here," she said. "We're a processing office for the move. A point of contact for the customer," said Hans Lautenschlager, transportation supervisor.

"It is good when the customer provides us an accurate phone number," Kotzbauer said allowing the office to contact families the moment they have news about their shipment.

The 106th Financial Management Company has a simple way of looking at their job.

"If it's finance related, it's done in this room," said Gerhard Scharf, bringing into focus some of the office responsibilities in handling all financial aspects of in- and out-processing, PCS settlements, debt management, retirements, bonus payments, and separation issues related to military personnel.

The Military Personnel Division has many day-to-day responsibilities necessary for most people in Hohenfels to be able to perform their jobs including the processing of identification cards, computer access cards, passports, Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System enrollments, voting assistance, casualty assistance, military awards, civilian recognition, the processing of approved personnel actions, and command sponsorship coordination.

Human Resources Technician Mattie Falealii, who has much of the responsibility of maintaining the enlisted record brief and the officers record brief said she is proud that the MPD has a mission that she defines as "service members can depend on us. With all they have to do, they simply shouldn't have to worry about us doing the proper thing."

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Brandi Stauber
Family Advocacy Program