


# WORKING TOGETHER

Four installation commanders on how a strong force and a supportive community are intrinsically linked.

Much of a service member's experience at an assignment depends on whether they and their family feel at home in the cities, towns and regions that surround the installations. ADC spoke with installation commanders across the nation about the importance of having a welcoming and inclusive community for their service members to call home.

*As told to Grace Marvin*



The relationship between Dyess Air Force Base and Abilene, Texas is phenomenal. This is my fourth assignment here and when I found out I was coming back, it felt like coming home. We like to talk about the big programs that the community puts on for the base, like the World's Largest BBQ, but really it is not about that. It's when you walk around town, the people embrace you and you feel like you are part of the community. You're not some outsider who happens to wear the uniform. How the community embraces the airmen and their families is absolutely different than any other assignment I've had.

**Col. Jose Ed Sumangil, Commander,  
7<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, Dyess Air Force Base**



Regional community support of historic Fort Riley, Kansas matches its legendary description, as previous commanders have proudly noted and I've quickly recognized. Recent formal partnerships between Fort Riley, Junction City and the surrounding Flint Hills communities include three signed and active Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSAs). Informal partnerships strengthen Fort Riley's standing as an Army installation and its reputation within the state. Local leaders understand the economic importance of the post and are intentional in cultivating relationships with the 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley leaders and its soldiers. Community-initiative programs such as Flint Hills Home Away from Home reinforce the Army's priority of people first.

**Col. Will McKannay,  
Garrison Commander, Fort Riley**

Little Rock Air Force Base is the beneficiary of long-standing support from the Central Arkansas community. I can tell you on a personal level I arrived here almost three years ago and from almost day one I was welcomed as if I was family. I know our airmen across Team Little Rock feel the same way. The community support that is provided allows us to focus on what is important as defenders of our nation's freedom.



**Col. John Schutte, Commander, 19<sup>th</sup>  
Airlift Wing, Little Rock Air Force Base**

In the 78 years the base has been here, we have built a symbiotic relationship with the local community. We don't have the encroachment challenges that other installations and communities have to work through. When we build, we do it in a way that works for the local community. When the community builds, they do it in a way that works for us. Certainly, relationships boil down to people. You won't find a more military-supportive community than the one you'll find in Bay County. I can't go downtown in my uniform without somebody stopping me and saying, "Thank you for your service." That fuels us as airmen and military members to want to do our jobs.



**Col. Brian Laidlaw, former  
Commander, 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing,  
Tyndall Air Force Base**