

Fort Stewart red cross begins dental assistant training

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Monday September 12th, marked the beginning of this year's Red Cross Dental Assistant program. In collaboration with Fort Stewart Dental Activity, the Fort Stewart Red Cross provides Family Members with the opportunity to receive a free education in dentistry. This year's program includes 10 students from all walks of life.

"Dental assisting is a growing occupation and military spouses are able to transfer their skill set when they PCS to a new location and find a job much easier," said Capt. Nazanin Ghazisharif, director of the Red Cross dental assistant program. "Many of [our] military spouses have sacrifice[d] their education and careers due to deployment and changing of duty stations. Many had children at a young age and put their career on hold."

Students, such as Jamie Meinelschmidt, understand those sacrifices. Jamie is a mother of two and a volunteer with the Winn Red Cross office. She puts her children's education before her own.

"In my situation, my husband's now an E-6, so I don't qualify for a whole lot of assistance financially," Meinelschmidt said. "Having two children it gets expensive with daycare and college. So for me it worked really well just because I know that I couldn't afford both on my own. So having schooling paid for is a big relief for my family."

The Red Cross Dental Assistant program can be broken down into two parts. Part one consists of orientation, lectures, book work and classroom assignments at dental clinic 4. Part two puts the students in the action, chairside with the dentists, which allows them to get valuable real world experience.

Capt. Nazanin Ghazisharif and Eva Quinn run the dental assistant program and look forward to providing military spouses with the ability to achieve success.

"What my co-director and I get from this program is the opportunity to teach and give these deserving military spouses a skill set they are able to use to better themselves and their families. It's their success stories and their appreciation of this program that gives us purpose," Ghazisharif said.

The students will get up close and personal with all aspects of the dentistry world, their training will require them to learn the ins and outs of patient protocol, become familiar with aseptic or sterilizing techniques, as well as, physical training that includes mixing the dental material, taking impressions, and capturing x-rays.

“What I hope to gain from this program is a better outlook as to if I want to go and become a dental hygienist afterwards, also I want to gain more independence in life, and know that I can provide for myself as well as my children,” Meineltschmidt said.

The Dental Assistant course begins on September 12 and will end with graduation in April 2017.

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Red Cross volunteer Jamie Meineltschmidt is one of ten students enrolled in this years Red Cross Dental Assistant Program.