



## **Hopkinsville (KY) REALTORS® Introduce Military Families to Housing Opportunities in Their Small Town—*July 2015***

The town of Hopkinsville, Kentucky is a great place to live. But the thousands of military families just 15 minutes south at Fort Campbell didn't even seem to be aware of it, buying homes and settling instead in a bigger, higher-profile metropolis in the opposite direction. Last September, with the help of a Housing Opportunity Grant from the REALTOR® Party, the 64-member Hopkinsville Christian & Todd County Association of REALTORS® [HCCBOR] got their attention with a fun-filled "REALTOR® Military Appreciation Picnic."

"We realized that the issue was promotion," recalls HCCBOR Association Executive Gay Wilson. "So we brainstormed ways to let the soldiers at Fort Campbell know about us, and at the same time, let them know how much we appreciate their service to our country." The local association is so small, she notes, that it would not have been possible to pull off such an event without the support of the REALTOR® Party. "We are so thankful that, even at our size, we can do things like this for our community -- and, ultimately, for our members," she says.

Working with the Military Affairs Committee of the local Chamber of Commerce, HCCBOR planned and promoted the picnic at an attractive working farm venue north of town, which forced its guests from Fort Campbell to drive through Hopkinsville en route to the event. They got the word out with radio spots and through social media, specifically targeting military spouses on the base. Local businesses and HCCBOR affiliate members contributed gift cards, door prizes, and items for goody bags. The local electric company provided bottled water. Although they had no way of predicting how many people to expect, they were hoping to attract about 500 military family members. "Imagine our shock when over 700 military family members showed up!" laughs Wilson, "Luckily, we had increased our food order at the last minute, just in case."

Almost half of HCCBOR's membership worked the event, greeting the military families, thanking them personally, and sharing information about Hopkinsville and its small-town benefits, as well as housing opportunities in the community. Others manned the grills and served the hundreds upon hundreds of hotdogs. "Everyone had a great time, and we kept hearing from our military guests, 'We'd never even heard of Hopkinsville!' So, it really was a huge success," states Wilson, who would like to be able to repeat the event every few years.

Meanwhile, HCCBOR has been able to follow up with picnic guests who registered for door prizes. Businesses in Hopkinsville are benefiting from the military-spouse word-of-mouth network. With the active support of HCCBOR, a member of the Military Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Commerce now attends a weekly orientation for new soldiers at Fort Campbell, to raise the town's profile on the base. And, since the picnic, Hopkinsville has seen steady home sales to military families: "We're up to between 7-10 a month," reports Wilson. "It has been awesome!"



To learn more about how the REALTORS® of Hopkinsville, Kentucky are tapping in to the military market at nearby Fort Campbell, contact Gay Wilson, Association Executive of the Hopkinsville Christian & Todd County Board of REALTORS®, at [hccbtor@hesenergy.net](mailto:hccbtor@hesenergy.net) or 270-885-8365.



HCCBOR Members have a good time putting on a successful picnic for military families to show off small-town benefits of living in Hopkinsville. More than 700 military family members attended.

