

A new coalition of area business and community leaders hopes to raise at least \$1 million to help Fort Campbell military families after the deployment to troops to Southwest Asia.

As troops prepare to deploy to the Persian Gulf for possible war with Iraq, the new fund-raising campaign, "Operation Eagle's Nest," will provide support to organizations already established that assist families of soldiers assigned to Fort Campbell.

Community leaders from Hopkinsville, Oak Grove and Clarksville, Tenn., are joining forces in this nationwide fund-raising effort.

"We have several retailers in the Clarksville and Hopkinsville areas who are obviously very dependent on the Fort Campbell community," said Mack Major, board chairman of the Hopkinsville-Christian County Chamber of Commerce, in a news conference today at the Holiday Inn. "The last thing that these business leaders and the communities as a whole want is to see these families leave. If we put together a fund-raising effort to help them financially, then they will consider staying in our community."

The Hopkinsville-Christian County and Clarksville chambers of commerce are expected to endorse Eagle's Nest by next Wednesday.

"The wheels are in motion, we just need to get the governing body in place and some of the details nailed down, but it's going to happen," said Chelsea Harkins, director of military affairs for the Hopkinsville chamber.

"Operation Eagle's Nest" is separate from the Adopt-A-Unit program, a sponsorship initiative that pairs businesses with units.

"(Even) if everybody adopts a unit, somebody is going to fall through the cracks," said Bill Sites, co-chair of the military affairs committee in Clarksville. "So why can't we do something collectively, instead of everybody having their own campaign, so that we can adopt the whole post."

Both chambers will provide members for a steering committee to determine the scope of "Operation Eagle's Nest." The steering committee will include members of the military affairs committees; Col. Kim Summers, Fort Campbell garrison commander; Holly Petraeus, wife of Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, 101st commander, among others.

Harkins said Fort Campbell will determine who gets assistance from "Operation Eagle's Nest" funds. She added that initial reaction to the fund-raiser has been positive.

"People are excited about it. They are glad the communities are taking on the initiative to contribute to the post," said Harkins. "Soldiers feel more at ease leaving knowing that their families have something like this to take care of them."

Tracey Williams, Hopkinsville chamber chief executive officer, said contributions to the fund have already been received from people all over the country.

Monies that are being contributed are tax deductible and can be mailed to "Operation Eagle's Nest," P.O. Box 203, Fort Campbell, Ky. 42223.

Williams said a logo is being developed and a Web site will soon be established at operationeaglesnest.org.