

Your BX/PX: What's the benefit?

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As a military spouse we lead hectic lives; dealing with deployment, careers, “single” parenting, household chores, and more. To add to that craziness the military is always adding some new acronym, coming up with some new program, and things are always changing and evolving. There is however, one thing that stays the same. You can always count on your BX/PX. Many of us know that our BX/PX is available to us but we haven't the slightest idea how it *benefits* us.

I spoke with AAFES' Senior Enlisted Advisor Chief Master Sgt. Bryan Eaton to get the scoop on what AAFES is all about.

TC: *What does AAFES stand for?*

AAFES: The Army & Air Force Exchange Service. Founded in 1895, AAFES is the Department of Defense's oldest and largest retailer, operating more than 3,100 facilities worldwide, in more than 30 countries, five U.S. territories and 49 states. AAFES operates some 147 retail stores and more than 2,000 fast food restaurants, such as Taco Bell, Burger King, Popeyes and Cinnabon. AAFES also provides military communities with convenience, specialty stores and movie theaters on installations worldwide, including locations in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

TC: *What is AAFES vision?*

AAFES: Our vision is to be our customers' first choice.

TC: *How does AAFES fit in with MWR?*

AAFES: Roughly two-thirds of AAFES earnings are paid to MWR programs to spend on quality of life improvements, including: Youth Services, Armed Forces Recreation Centers, arts and crafts, aquatic centers, post functions and golf courses. For 2006, AAFES paid a per capita dividend of \$229 for every Soldier and Airman.

TC: *How does AAFES compete with other retail store offers/prices?*

AAFES: Smart shoppers know that AAFES offers unbeatable value thanks to no sales tax and "We'll Match It."

“We'll Match It!” works in two ways:

- Shoppers who see a price differential of less than \$10 can tell the cashier who will match it on the spot.
- Customers who report a price difference of greater than \$10 need only to bring a current local competitor's ad to receive the reduced price.

TC: *Can you tell us about AAFES online shopping?*

AAFES: The All-Service Exchange Online Store, at aafes.com, usmc-mccs.org, navy-nex.com or cg-exchange.com, continues to take the exchange benefit beyond the installation gate and into the comfort of military families' homes and work. Today, the exchanges' Web sites deliver tax-free shopping to authorized customers in every corner of the globe. With more than 30,000

products, plus the inventories of multiple online vendor partners, the Exchange Online Store logs more than 2 million visits per month.

Today, the Exchange Online Mall boasts 73 unique concessions. Current offers exclusive include discounts of 5 to 10 percent at Babies1st.com, 10 percent off products and 5 percent of shipping from CustomAutoParts.com and a 15 percent discount on all products available through FTD.com.

TC: *How does a customer receive AAFES ads and or catalogs?*

AAFES: Log on AAFES.com. From there, you can download Exchange food coupons, opt in for the BX/PX email newsletter, choose to receive weekly sale flyers by mail or sign up for your local "BX/PX Buddy List."

TC: *How much money can AAFES save you on average?*

AAFES: AAFES saves military Families money everyday by survey prices nationally and locally, price cutting and putting items on sale and clearance. All this and No Sales Tax! AAFES' 2007 Market Basket Survey found average savings of 19.84% (not including the sales tax benefit) vs. the competition (<http://www.aafes.com/docs/pdfs/SavingsbyMarket07.pdf>).

TC: *What is something that you think military families do not know about AAFES?*

AAFES: AAFES provides school lunch to K-12 students on Army and Air Force Installations in 9 countries overseas. We serve 24,000 pattern meals each day for a total of more than 4.4 million meals each school year. We support educational programs in 99 schools throughout Europe and the Pacific.

TC: *What do you think is under utilized?*

AAFES: The MILITARY STARSM Card. Using the MILITARY STARSM Card is one of the easiest ways for troops to directly impact their Exchange and MWR benefits. Since 2001, AAFES has paid more than \$310 million in fees to card issuing banks, resulting in lost revenues for the military community.

TC: *If you were to describe one reason why a military spouse would want to shop AAFES what would it be?*

AAFES: Value. AAFES not only saves shoppers money, but also support critical quality of life programs for military communities across the globe.