Army Clean
by Tricia Baker, CPPA

I volunteer with one of the Utah National Guard’s family readiness groups. Last month the Soldiers spent their drill weekend updating paperwork, medical records, uniforms, and receiving annual briefings on important topics. With so many soldiers in one place, the family readiness groups were able to use the weekend for fundraising by selling snacks, lunches, and drinks for those who were drilling. As I staffed our unit’s booth, I had plenty of time to observe the comings and goings of the day, and to learn a little about team-work in the process.

There was plenty of whining about the "hurry up and wait" element that naturally accompanies such an event, but overall, it was very efficient. Getting 600 or so soldiers through all of the requirements takes some organization! It was a cold, snowy day, and as people were coming in and out of the front doors with snow on their boots, the floor was getting more and more dirty. All of a sudden, what seemed like an entire platoon appeared with mops and buckets, and within about 2 minutes, the entire atrium floor had been washed; and not just washed any old way, but washed "army clean."

I realize that this was the military – and that some Commander somewhere sent an order for the floor to be cleaned, and orders were followed. However, it was very impressive! The team-work required to achieve such a task – volunteered or ordered - is the same everywhere.

One of the things I enjoy about where I work is the willingness of others to work as a team. It is a legacy of a former director, and it is something I value greatly. I have worked on projects where I wasn’t sure quite how I’d get it all done, but thanks to team-work, it was all done - and on time!  Our team has regular coordination meetings where everyone’s input is requested on how to solve particular issues or problems. It’s okay to disagree with each other and to discuss different approaches in order to make sure we have the best product for our clients. This doesn’t mean that everything is always easy - it’s not - and friction can occur, but for the most part it works beautifully. In contrast, I have worked elsewhere and been frustrated by the individualistic and territorial approaches that were standard practice.

Most people are aware of what makes a good team, either from reading or from experience, or both, so I won’t waste space writing about those, but I do want to pose some questions: how is the team-work in your organization? Do your people work together or do they work against each other? Can they put aside personal differences to achieve something for the greater good? If required, could they get the floor "army clean."

It’s worth a few minutes of your time evaluating the team-work in your organization. Just remember, there are dangers in teamwork too, and we all need to watch out for those. Concepts such as group-think can cause havoc with the creative process, and cause less efficiency, not more.

Now, where’s the mop and bucket?