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Lance Cpl. Gabriel J. Weaver, rifleman, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, provides cover fire for his squad during an assault course as part of Exercise Chosin, a squad-level training evolution, at Range 410, Aug. 26.

'War Dogs' prepare to march with squad competition

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. LEVI SCHULTZ

The Marine Rifle Squad has been the basic tactical unit of the Marine Corps since before World War II. While the composition of the rifle squad has evolved throughout the Corps' history in battle, its significance has not.

"At the end of the day, if you unpack any tactical situation you will find that it will always come down to the rifle squad," said Lt. Col. Steele, battalion commander, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "It is up to them to close the last 100 yards and they are the ones that win battles."

The 2/7 Marines' teamwork and perseverance

See **War Dogs pg.** A6

Pfc. Anthony C. Alamillo and Pfc. Nathan S. Barnes, mortar men, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, provide support fire with a M224A1 60mm Mortar System during Exercise Chosin, a squad-level training evolution, at Range 410, August 26. The Marines with Weapons Company provided support to Company E as they executed an assault course.

SecDef deems NREA Corps' best

Members of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, proudly display their 2015 Sustainability, Non-Industrial Installation Awards from the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Defense, outside of the NREA building, Aug. 18. NREA was recognized for their achievements in May.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

In May, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs was awarded the 2015 Sustainability, Non-Industrial Installation Award from both the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense. The Combat Center also won the Secretary of the Navy Environmental Award for Natural Resource Conservation.

"We conduct a lot of training out here," said Brian Henen, ecologist, NREA. "We have 40 to 50 thousand Marines here every year and that impacts the environment over time. Ultimately what we're trying to do is protect the environment that not only meets the legal requirements for protecting resources but also allows the Marines to work in an environment that is sustained over time."

NREA is split into many divisions, each one playing an important role in the sustainment and improvement of the installation. Collectively, NREA implements and manages natural resources and environmental programs for the installation. Some of those programs include: the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, which was put in place to guide surveys and conservation of the ecosystem. The Combat Center's Biological Opinions were negotiated to cover base wide training, construction programs, the base expansion and the Desert Tortoise Headstart Program,

See **NREA pg.** A6

Combat Center to host HITT championship

STORY BY HEATHER HAGAN, MARINE AND FAMILY PROGRAMS DIVISION

Thirty-two active duty Marines will compete at the inaugural High Intensity Tactical Training Athlete Championship aboard the Combat Center, Sept. 15-17, 2015. From the 32 competitors, one male and one female Marine will be crowned the 2015 "Ultimate Tactical Athlete."

Marines all over the world competed for the chance to participate in the championship. The preliminary HITT Tactical Athlete Competitions have concluded throughout the Marine Corps and the top male and female winners from each installation have been identified.

"The HITT Tactical Athlete Championship will bring together some of the most elite tactical athletes in the Marine Corps" said Ryan Massimo, HITT Program Manager. "The championship events are designed to showcase a combination of tactical skills with athleticism during a grueling three-day schedule consisting of five events that will challenge competitors on their mental and physical capabilities."

The five events include strength conditioning activities such as running, lifting, and jumping. All activities support combat readiness increasing physical capabilities.

HITT is a comprehensive strength and conditioning program that provides programming, facilities and education to active duty and reserve Marines. Information regarding the program can be found at local Semper Fit and Recreation offices or installation fitness centers across the Corps.

"Marines are always looking for a way to compete and this event will encompass skills that require the determination and competitive fire Marines possess," said Massimo. "Developed through an approach consistent with the HITT program, the Championship will focus on key components with relation to superior speed, power, strength, endurance and overall combat readiness while reducing the likelihood of injury and crown the "Ultimate Tactical Athlete" within the Marine Corps."

HITT is focused on developing and maintaining a Marine's physical resiliency and combat readiness. There are 150 pre-designed workouts for any combat conditioning leader and fitness specialist. Phases include pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment; there is also an option to build individual workout templates. HITT is endorsed by the National Strength and Conditioning Association's - Tactical Strength and Conditioning Department.

Marine Corps' Top Shot

Every week, thousands of fans cast their votes for the best photograph posted on the Corps' Facebook page. This week's top shot comes from Cpl. William Perkins.

Marines assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, run along hills during the Dark Horse Ajax Challenge aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Aug. 20.

This Week in Combat Center History

Reprinted from the Observation Post
September 3, 1965
Courtesy Story

Labor Day Salutes Skill, Strength of U.S. Workers

To many Americans, Labor Day is simply the last holiday of the summer season. Since it always involves a three-day weekend, millions of people observe it by jamming the nation's highways, trying to have as much last-minute "fun-in-thesun" as possible before the approach of winter. The true meaning of Labor Day is all but lost to many of us. That is unfortunate, because Labor Day has a deep significance for all Americans. So let's refresh our memory. Let's take a quick look at the history of Labor Day and the American heritage it represents. Labor Day is a working man's holiday. Observance of it began in 1882 when the Knights of Labor, a workers' organization of the time, sought to name the first Monday in September Labor Day. Working people throughout the nation asked for state laws to make it a legal holiday. Oregon, in 1887, was the first to act. Other states quickly followed suit. Congress declared it a national holiday in 1894. Now it is a legal holiday throughout the United States and Canada as well. From the beginning, the idea behind Labor Day was to commemorate the efforts of the American labor force that group of working men and women who represent a cross section of American strength and know-how.

Why a special day just for working people? As members of the armed forces, we can provide one ready answer. Our weapons, our equipment- used in our daily job of protecting America's freedom are the result of American skill. Without the labor force, there would be no planes to fly, no missiles to launch, no uniforms to wear, no barracks, no office equipment none of the ordinary tools we use every day. So while you are on your way to your holiday fun spot this Labor Day, take a moment to remember that the car you're riding in, the road you're driving on-in fact, just about everything that makes America great-are products of the American working man and woman.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Everly Nell Denvir
Born July 29, 2015
Born to Sam and Erinn Denvir

Riley Jade Burkart
Born August 01, 2015
Born to Thomas and Allison Burkart

Flynn Ryan Taylor
Born August 01, 2015
Born to Dustin and Lauren Taylor

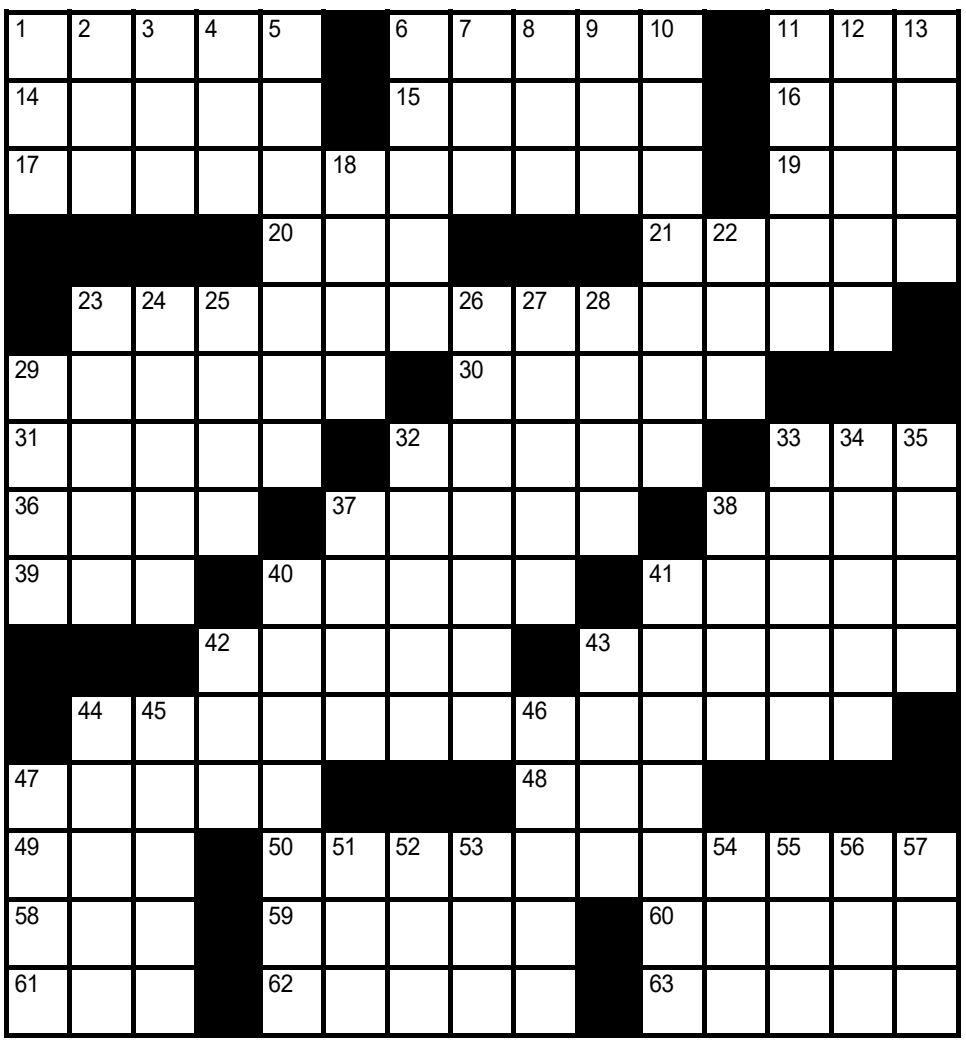
Caiden Kyle Lieberman
Born August 7, 2015
Born to Kyle and Cassandra Lieberman

Avery Raine Casias
Born August 8, 2015
Born to Anthony and Ariel Casias

Tyler Abel Ehardt
Born August 14, 2015
Born to Eric and Leslie Ehardt

Lucia Ramona Mcallister
Born August 14, 2015
Born to Joshua and Christina McAllister

CROSSWORD



Across
1. Grounds for a medal
6. Delta opening
11. Blackberry, e.g.
14. ___ and fauna
15. Bohemian
16. Hang loosely
17. TV show with zombies, with "The"
19. Commercials
20. ___ Francisco
21. Kitchen cooker
23. Not a yes or no
29. Buttering up
30. Terre ___, IN
31. Comb stoppers
32. Twilled fabric
33. "Concentration" pronoun
36. Emulates Eminem
37. ___ Jr. (burger chain)
38. Celtic ministrel
39. "We ___ Family"
40. "I can do that"
41. Place
42. Leaf
43. Classic Nabokov novel
44. Good guess
47. Ship board
48. Jonson work
49. Article in Die Welt
50. Seafood serving
58. Put two and two together
59. Benefit
60. Skunk relative
61. Critical
62. Wizardry supplies
63. Cheese hunk

Down
1. Ex-GI's grp.
2. ___ carte (menu phrase)
3. "U r a clown!"
4. Old sitcom planet
5. California fruit
6. Great: Prefix
7. Old California fort
8. Sport ___ (4 x 4 vehicle)
9. Body scanner org.
10. Add water to
11. Back-up strategy
12. Duck
13. Recess
18. Da ___, Vietnam
22. Reply to a captain
23. Algerian money
24. Skip off
25. Partner of starts
26. Coffee holder
27. Country rocker Steve
28. Coffee holders
29. Gumbo vegetable
32. French composer Erik
33. "Weird" Al tune
34. Correspond
35. Writer Ferber
37. Irish native
38. Actor Lugosi
40. Tetanus spasm
41. By hook or by crook
42. Bleacher bum
43. Tops
44. Omit
45. Standard graph axes
46. Kit contents
47. Pinnacle
51. Charlottesville sch.
52. "Gee whiz!"
53. Auction action
54. Road with a no.
55. "___ be a pleasure!"
56. Actress Ryan
57. Ante-

SUDOKU

	1		2		3			
4		5					3	6
				7		1		8
7		1		8				
	2	3	5		6	4	8	
				3		9		1
8		6		5				
1	4					6		5
			1		9		7	

Last week's answers

C	O	M	B	■	S	L	O	T	■	■	S	L	I	T
L	U	A	U	■	T	O	D	O	■	P	H	A	S	E
A	C	R	E	■	A	N	O	N	■	H	O	W	I	E
W	H	E	N	A	N	G	R	Y	C	O	U	N	T	■
■	■	■	O	R	C	■	■	A	U	N	T	■	■	■
O	D	D	■	C	E	L	S	■	M	E	D	A	L	S
F	I	A	T	S	■	O	M	N	I	■	O	B	I	E
F	O	U	R	■	T	W	A	I	N	■	W	H	E	N
E	D	N	A	■	H	E	C	K	■	S	N	O	B	S
R	E	T	I	R	E	■	K	E	M	P	■	R	Y	E
■	■	■	N	O	T	E	■	■	A	A	A	■	■	■
■	V	E	R	Y	A	N	G	R	Y	S	W	E	A	R
M	I	M	I	C	■	R	O	A	N	■	F	U	S	E
A	B	I	D	E	■	O	R	Z	O	■	U	R	I	S
P	E	T	E	■	■	N	E	E	T	■	L	O	F	T

7	5	1	2	8	9	3	6	4
9	4	8	5	6	3	1	2	7
3	6	2	7	1	4	9	5	8
1	8	7	4	3	2	6	9	5
6	9	3	8	5	7	2	4	1
4	2	5	6	9	1	8	7	3
5	3	6	9	4	8	7	1	2
2	1	4	3	7	6	5	8	9
8	7	9	1	2	5	4	3	6

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MCIWest off-limits establishments guidance prohibits service members from patronizing the following locations. This order applies to all military personnel.

In Oceanside:
- Angelo's Kars, 222 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054
- Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054

In San Diego:
- Club Mustang, 2200 University Ave.
- Club San Diego, 3955 Fourth St.
- Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.
- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.
-Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar St.

In National City:
- Dream Crystal, 15366 Highland Ave.
- Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

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In Twentynine Palms:
- Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
- K Smoke Shop, 5865A Adobe Rd.

In Yucca Valley:
- Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.
- Puff's Tobacco Mart, 57063 29 Palms Hwy.

In Palm Springs:
- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.
- Whispering Palms Apts., 449 E. Arenas Road
- NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive

For the complete orders, but not off-limits, check out the Combat Center's official-website at http://www.29palms.marines.mil

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Isaac HOWARD

Administrative specialist, Headquarters Battalion, Age: 20

Howard started wrestling when he was 8 and placed first in Illinois' wrestling championship in 2010, his freshman year of high school.

>I was originally born in Kansas City and I moved to Chicago, Ill. when I was 5 years old.

>My mom is the second youngest of 13 children, my dad is the oldest of 4 so I come from a pretty large family.

>Growing up I played football, wrestled and ran track.

>I had a lot of energy as a kid so my parents enrolled me in sports. I started wrestling when I was in grade school because my dad signed me up for it, I didn't start track and football until middle school.

>I liked wrestling the most. With football it took me about a year to get used to the contact and then I fell in love with it. I didn't like track for about the first year and a half, because I didn't really like running but it paid off and I learned to love it too.

>I liked football because it taught me how to portion out my meals, how to lose weight. Track helped me build my speed and endurance.

>I love the competition in wrestling and there was a new move to learn every day. I grew as a person in different ways from doing each of those sports.

>I think being fit and participating in sports prior to the Marine Corps helped a lot.

>I received three scholarships for wrestling my senior year of high school but instead of going to college, I wanted to join the Marine Corps first and then pursue my athletic goals after.

>The farthest that I've ever gotten in wrestling was my freshman year. I won state at 112 lbs., and I competed in a 7A division school.

>I'd say the team aspect of being involved in sports is something that definitely helped me when it came to becoming a Marine. Teamwork is everything in the Marine Corps and in this organization, it just doesn't start with the sergeant major or the general, it starts from the bottom up.

>I joined the Marine Corps because I grew up in a military family. My uncle was in the Army, my sister did two enlistments in the Navy, and my step-dad served 24 years in the Marine Corps. I was always held to a high standard and I knew that when I got older I wanted to join the military and maintain that in my life.

>I believe that the Marine Corps holds people to a higher standard. There's something about earning that Eagle, Globe and Anchor that sends chills down your spine. I think the Marine Corps is the best of all the branches and I wanted to be a part of that.

>There are times when I miss wrestling, but every time I go home on leave, I go back to help my team, talk to my wrestling coaches and go to competitions.

>I want to be a physical education teacher someday. I like working with kids and I want to be able to impart the importance of fitness and teamwork on the younger generation.

>I had a football coach who was also my PE teacher in grade school and onward into high school, so he's been my mentor for the majority of my life. Growing up, I always looked up to him.

>I like to sing and I like to rap. I fell in love with rap when I was in second grade after I started writing poetry. My teacher sat down with me and taught me the basics of haikus and what the 14 syllables meant.

>A lot of people think that poetry has to rhyme or be about certain things, but I think that poetry can be about anything. It is one of the best ways a person can express themselves, because there are so many things that you can put into poetry.

>Poetry and rap come to me naturally; I'll write whatever is on my mind. If someone gives me a topic then I'll just write about it.

>I listen to a lot of different music because I think it's important to broaden your horizons, and not restrict yourself to one genre of music.

>One thing I've learned so far is to never give up, and I will carry that with me wherever I go.

>I would say my favorite thing about being a Marine is the bond that's forged with the people you meet. It's like joining a lifelong family.

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

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Gas, Gas, Gas! Marines gain confidence with CBRN training

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. LEVI SCHULTZ

Gas! Gas! Gas! Echoed-shouts filled the room as rapid arm movements set the Marines into motion; initiating a race against time. With tightly shut eyes, they held onto one last breath and reached for their masks. The Marines hastily positioned the equipment on their faces, fastening the straps; pulling them tight and securing the masks in place.

"Nine seconds," said Cpl. Lauren Wiley, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense specialist, Marine Aircraft Group 13. "That's all the time you have to equip the gas mask once the signal for gas has been given."

CBRN defense specialists with MAG-13 assisted Marines from Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 and Headquarters Battalion in building trust and confidence in their gear while in chemically unsafe locations during individual equipment confidence courses at building 1980, Aug. 27.

"The last thing you should have to worry about in a deployed environment is whether or not your suit is protecting you," said Lance Cpl. Christopher Barnes, CBRN defense specialist, MAG-13. "The purpose of the training is to create confidence in your suit and your mask. Our purpose is to teach the Marines how to continue the mission if contamination occurs."

The CBRN defense specialists covered the use of the joint-service, lightweight, integrated suit technology and the M50 joint-service general purpose mask designed to protect the wearer while in a contaminated environment.

They also provided a refresher course for those who already attended three-day, reconnaissance, surveillance and decontamination course.

"In the RS&D course we teach other teams and units so that they can essentially do our job," Wiley said. "It enables them to do recon and testing for whatever contamination there may be."

Following the courses, Marines received transport to Range 105 to put what they just learned to the test through practical application in the confidence chamber. CBRN defense specialists burned tablets of Chlorobenzylidene Malononitrile gas as they assessed Marines' understanding of the equipment with a variety of exercises inside the enclosed building.

"Once you hear the signal, all you think about is getting the mask on and following the training," said Lance Cpl. Andrew Kays, unmanned aerial systems technician, VMU-1.

"The practical application helps us to override the initial reaction to freeze. Eventually, through practice, it becomes second nature. Those three or four seconds of hesitation can make all the difference in a real situation."

CBRN defense specialists stressed the importance of qualifying with the mask annually to ensure that Marines remain ready for any situation.

"Just like you keep up your annual training in swim and rifle qualification, it's important to keep up on your CBRN training," Barnes said. "You may not use it that year, but when you use it, you need to be ready."

Sgt. Heather Keasler, administrative specialist, Headquarters Battalion, engages in exercises during annual training in the confidence chamber at Range 105, Aug. 27. CBRN defense specialists burned tablets of Chlorobenzylidene Malononitrile gas to test the Marines confidence with the M50 joint service general purpose mask.

Lance Cpl. Christopher Barnes, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense specialist, Marine Aircraft Group 13, burns tablets of Chlorobenzylidene malononitrile gas during annual training in the confidence chamber at Range 105, Aug. 27. Marines are required to qualify in the confidence chamber annually.

Cpl. Tristofer Ducharme, operator, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1, removes his M50 joint service general purpose mask during annual training in the confidence chamber at Range 105, Aug. 27. While inside the chamber the Marines are required to perform exercises to ensure the mask is properly sealed.

Combat Center promotes flash flood awareness

STORY BY LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

The Combat Center has delved into the first of four informational weeks for America's Prepare-A-Thon 2015. The month-long presidential campaign is geared toward providing residents aboard the installation with the knowledge needed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from man-made incidents and natural disasters. This week's focus is on flash flooding.

"As far as flash flooding is concerned, we want to make people aware of the dangers flash floods can present," said J. Luis Aguirre, installation emergency management specialist, G-7 Mission Assurance. "The more you know, the safer you and your loved ones will be in the event of an incident."

Flooding is the most common natural disaster and can occur anywhere. Unlike floods, which can develop over a period of days giving you enough time to prepare, flash floods can develop in a matter of minutes.

"Just like in any other scenario, it is necessary for the community to be prepared when it comes to flash floods," Aguirre said. "The main objective is to have a community that is resilient. That will only occur through education and self-awareness. "

Flash flood waters are caused by heavy rain. These floods are destructive and can carry debris, rocks and mud. Often times, rushing flood waters can be deeper and stronger than they look.

"The Marine Corps has implemented an informational website, which provides information on what to do in the event of a natural disaster occurring" Aguirre said. "We will have information booths set up at the main exchange, every Friday at 10 a.m., to ensure we're reaching the local and base community."

Although the installation is equipped with an advanced drainage system, it does not mean it isn't susceptible to the effects of flash flooding. When preparing for a flash flood, or in the event of one occurring, it's important to:

- monitor radio, television and emergency mass notification system alerts for information and instructions
- move to higher ground immediately
- if ordered to evacuate, only take items that are essential
- disconnect appliances and turn off gas, electricity and water.

"I believe that taking the time to actually review all individual emergency plans is very important because it gives families an opportunity to plan ahead," Aguirre said.

For additional information on how to identify the actions to be taken in the event of a flash flood, visit www.ready.marines.mil or contact the G-7 Mission Assurance branch at 830-1884.

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were put to the test during Exercise Chosin, a squad-level training evolution, held aboard the Combat Center, Aug. 24 through 28.

"When we look at a deployment we ask ourselves the question, 'what are the most arduous circumstances we could find ourselves in?'" Steele said. "The answer to that question is offensive and defensive operations. We might be asked to perform them in the desert or an urban environment."

The exercise, held as a competition between squads, evaluated the Marines on efficiency and precision as they performed offensive, defensive and urban operations. Throughout the exercise, the companies in 2/7 alternated between Ranges 100, 215 and 410.

"The ultimate goal is to create an environment that challenges the squad leader," Steele said. "What we are looking to assess, at the battalion level, is their proficiency in offensive and defensive operations as well as to observe them in both a desert environment and urban environment."

While at Range 100, the Marines were tasked with hastily setting up squad-level defensive positions where they fended off simulated attacks.

To evaluate the Marines in urban operations, the squads conducted simulated assaults at Range 215, a Military Operations and Urban Training town. Role-players brought a sense of reality to the assault as Marines took to the streets and stormed buildings to clear the sectors of the town.

Rifle squads executed an assault course with support from M224A1 60mm Mortars at Range 410. The mortars served to destroy a simulated bunker while the maneuver element breached barbed wire to begin live-fire on a trench. Upon clearing the trench, the squad leader received a situation report from his Marines before they repelled a counterattack.

"If we can excel in the high end of military operations, we will be able to excel in the low end as well," Steele said. "The design of this exercise really speaks to that. Our focus is solely on our core tasks and ensuring our Marines are ready for whatever a deployment might throw at them."

Recently, many of the junior Marines have begun filling squad leader positions, he added.

"Many of the Marines have done an excellent job of stepping up into leadership positions," said Cpl. Kevin Clark, squad leader, 2/7. "It's very important to do training evolutions with the focus on the squad like this. If you have strong fire teams and strong rifle squads, that can act independently, you can be prepared for anything."

As a squad leader, Clark stressed the importance of taking care of Marines and ensuring they are ready for any situation.

"As an individual rifleman your weapon is your rifle, as a squad leader your weapon is your three fire teams," Clark said. "You should always know the job that is two billets above you and ensure the Marines under you know yours."

With the exercise completed and all squads successfully evaluated in MOUT, offensive and defensive operations, Steele expressed optimism for the future of 2/7.

"I have come to expect exceptional things from these men," Steele said. "I have been with 2/7 for just over two and a half months now and I've been nothing but impressed with our squad-level leadership."

Pfc. Juan B. Garcia, rifleman, 2nd Battalion, Company E, 7th Marine Regiment, leaps into a trench during an assault course as part of Exercise Chosin, a squad-level training evolution, at Range 410, Aug. 26.

Lance Cpl. Cory B. Larson, rifleman, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, provides cover fire for his squad during an assault course as part of Exercise Chosin, squad-level training evolution, at Range 410, Aug. 26. The squad assaulted a trench defense with support from M224A1 60mm Mortars.

NREA from pg. A1

aimed at contributing to the recovery of the desert tortoise species. Through community outreach, the Combat Center has continued to contribute to natural resources education and conservation programs aboard the installation and throughout the region.

"As a whole, each individual section plays its own role, but together we create the sustainability that's necessary to not only win the award, but to keep winning the award year after year," said Norman Troy, unexploded ordnance supervisor, Range Sustainment Branch, NREA. "As far as the programs we have in place, we don't just look at this year, we look at 10 years from now."

This is the first year NREA has won both the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Defense awards for Sustainability. Once the Secretary of the Navy Award is bestowed upon an installation in the Marine Corps, the Secretary of Defense then chooses the most sustainable base from all five branches, and awards the title of 'most sustainable' making the Combat Center, and thus the Marine Corps, the most environmentally conscience non-industrial installation with regard to sustainability within the Department of Defense.

"We come here every day with the idea that we are trying to protect the resources, but in a way that still allows the Marines to train," Henen said. "We have range clean up teams, and personnel scoping out the best locations for training exercises. The installation is a large community and we're working with that community to keep the base going."

Members of Natural Resources and Environmental Affair's Hazardous Waste Management branch, proudly display their 2015 Sustainability, Non-Industrial Installation Awards from the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Defense, outside of the HWM facility, Aug. 18.

From policing the training areas for anything that could be harmful to the environment to providing educational programs for its residents, NREA ensures they preserve the environment and in turn contribute to the training mission of the installation so many call home.

"It's nice for the recognition to happen because we're doing a job that nobody really knows is happening," Troy said. "Being recognized helps improve the customer service and the day-to-day operations. When people realize what we're doing and why we're trying to accomplish the mission, everything runs smoother."

CFC kickoff lunch held at Hashmark's SNCO club

Combat Center Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, thanks Combined Federal Campaign unit representatives for their contribution to the program during the CFC kickoff lunch at Hashmark's Staff Non-commissioned Officer's Club, Tuesday.

Ramon L. Vargas-Ortiz, administration specialist, G-1 Adjutant's Office, receives an award for his work towards the Combined Federal Campaign presented by Combat Center Sergeant Major, Sgt. Maj. Karl Villalino, during the CFC kickoff lunch, Tuesday.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. LEVI SCHULTZ

The Combined Federal Campaign held its kickoff lunch at the Hashmark's Staff Non-commissioned Officer's Club, Tuesday.

The CFC is the only authorized solicitation of federal employees in the workplace from approved local, national and international charity organizations. During the kickoff lunch, the unit representatives received information on the campaign and discussed this year's goals.

"Established in 1961, the CFC has grown to be the single, largest charitable event in the world," said Ramon L. Vargas-Ortiz, administration specialist, G-1 Adjutant's Office. "The annual fundraising campaign helps to support a variety of health and human services provided by thousands of charitable agencies."

Beginning in 2014, donors could make a pledge to any of approximately 22,000 charities that were approved to participate in their respective CFC regions. Last year, the Combat Center raised more than $140,000 in support of the campaign.

"The CFC is important because your gift may improve the quality of life for you or your neighbors," Vargas-Ortiz said. "You may have to access one of the thousands of vital health and social services not supplied, or only partially covered, by government sources."

Events such as the CFC golf tournament to be held at the Desert Winds Golf Course, November 6, and the 5k Fun Run to be held at the Obstacle Course, December 11, are held throughout the campaign to promote participation.

"With so many charities to choose from, find something close to your heart," said Beverly Caires, manager, Southern California CFC. "There are so many charities that rely on community involvement, so the program is not only for others but also for our families and ourselves."

During the lunch, units that met the criteria for the campaign last fiscal year received bronze and gold awards. Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital and Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group received the bronze award for meeting either 50 to 60 percent participation or averaging 50 to 65 dollars per person. The gold award went to 23rd Dental Company for 70 to 80 percent participation or averaging 80 to 100 dollars per person.

"During CFC 2014, we experienced a 42-percent increase in the total amount raised in donations aboard the Combat Center," Vargas-Ortiz said. "With everyone's support, I am sure that we can top last year's total. With thousands of charities available, I am confident that people will be able to find a non-profit organization they would want to support."

Combat Center Commanding General Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta thanked the representatives for their hard work to ensure the program is a success. The representatives have set a goal for the program, looking to raise 150,000 dollars in donations.

"The CFC gives everyone an opportunity to reflect on how we, federal government employees, are afforded benefits and securities that many people do not have," Vargas-Ortiz said. "It is the perfect opportunity to support charities and organizations that provide assistance to people in need."

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Combat Center holds Family Fun Night

Isaac Vanegas, 11, son of Ivette Vanegas, dons Combat Center Firefighter's gear during the Behavior Health Family Fun Night at Heritage Park, Aug. 28. The event served to bring the community together and highlight the resources available to the families aboard the installation.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. LEVI SCHULTZ

Combat Center families explored carnival theme games and Fire Department displays during the Behavior Health Family Fun Night at Heritage Park, Aug. 28.

Marine Corps Community Services' Behavioral Health Branch hosted the event to provide families with an opportunity to get together and have fun as well as a means to provide information on MCCS services and programs.

"The event is to highlight the resources available to the families aboard the installation," said Carleen Dickson, prevention education coordinator, Substance Abuse Counseling Center. "We wanted to make it interactive and engaging for the families."

Many different entities throughout MCCS set up stands at the event to get information out to families. The Red Cross, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, Drug Demand Reduction Program, Community Counseling Center and the Combat Center Library were some of the organizations present.

"We hold a lot of events and services for single Marines but sometimes the families will miss out on many services that are available for them on base," Dickson said.

A rock-climbing wall, inflatable obstacle course, beer goggles, snow cones, cotton candy, dunk tank, and other attractions were provided for free and served to make the event fun for children. The Combat Center Fire Department also brought Fire Truck 451 and the Provost Marshal's Office the Drug Abuse Resistance Education Lion interacted with children.

"The event was started to get families to have fun and show them what services we have available for them," Dickson said.

Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 raised money for their birthday ball by selling barbecue hamburgers and hot dogs.

"I'm a single parent, so it's great to get out here with my kids," said Cpl. Christine Dudkewitz, radio operator, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group. "Events like this give the kids more opportunities to see their friends and have fun. It also gives the parents a chance to get together."

Camyelle Hollins, 3, daughter of Sgt. Antonio J. Hollins, field radio operator, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, points out the flavor of a snow cone to Lance Cpl. Bernardo Grandinetti, rifleman, 3rd LAR, during the Behavior Health Family Fun Night at Heritage Park, Aug. 28.

Charlie Eggers, 14, son of Col. Harold B. Eggers, commanding officer, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, scales a rock-climbing wall during the Behavior Health Family Fun Night at Heritage Park, Aug. 28.

Provost Marshal's Office Drug Abuse Resistance Education Lion, Daren, interacts with Delaney Hoffman, 1, child of Rebecca Hoffman, during the Behavior Health Family Fun Night at Heritage Park, August 28. The Red Cross, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, Drug Demand Reduction, Community Counselling Center, and the Combat Center Library were some of the organizations present.

Combat Center Events

Head out to the free Music and Comedy show at Del Valle Field, September 12 from 6 to 10 p.m. The combined comedy show and musical concert will feature special appearances by Lupe Fiasco, Deray Davis and Shayma Tash. The event is open to all hands. Special seating will be available for all active duty members on a first come, first served basis. For more information contact MCCS at 760-830-5086.

Looking to provide support for our troops? Head to building 1433 for a Caregiver Peer-to-Peer Support Forum. You can meet new people and support wounded, ill or injured service members. The next forum will take place September 15 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. For more information, contact Teri Templeton at 909-963-8776.

Come visit Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center. With well-maintained lanes, large screen televisions, and a digital jukebox, it's a great facility for indoor recreational fun and relaxation. Tournaments are offered regularly and cosmic bowling runs every Friday and Saturday evening. For more information, contact the bowling center 760-830-6422.

Visit the Sand Trap Grill at the Desert Winds Golf Course, The Grill brings back old favorites like the charbroiled hamburger, salads, hot dogs and breakfast. Their expansive seating accommodates large groups of people. For more information, contact the golf course at 760-830-6132.

Are you a Marine or sailor looking to get into law enforcement? Stop by the Provost Marshal's Office anytime to apply for the Auxiliary Reserve Program. You'll be given the opportunity to serve the community while getting trained in practical applications, including live-fire drills. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information, contact the operations officer at 760-830-6095.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, September 4
6:00 p.m.- Fantastic Four, PG-13
9:00 p.m.- Mission: Impossible-Rouge Nation, PG-13
Saturday, September 5
12:30 p.m.- Minions, PG
3:00 p.m.- Pixels, PG-13
5:30 p.m.- Vacation, R
8:30 p.m.- The Gift, R
Sunday, September 6
12:30 p.m.- Ant-Man, PG-13
3:30 p.m.- Fantastic Four, PG-13
6:00 p.m.- Mission: Impossible-Rouge Nation, PG-13
9:00 p.m.- The Gift, R
Monday, September 7
4:00 p.m.- Fantastic Four, PG-13
Tuesday, September 8
7:00 p.m.- Mission: Impossible-Rouge Nation, PG-13
Wednesday, September 9
5:00 p.m.- Trainwreck, R
7:30 p.m.- The Gift, R
Thursday, September 10
5:00 p.m.- Minions, PG
7:00 p.m.- Ant-Man, PG-13
Friday, September 11
6:00 p.m.- The Man from U.N.C.L.E, PG-13
8:30 p.m.- Straight Outta Compton, R

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"American Ultra" Starring Jesse Eisenberg & Kristen Stewart Directed by Nima Nourizadeh Rated R

Mike (Jesse Eisenberg) is an underachiever pothead, working the overnight shift at a minimart and doodling comics in his sketchbook. Mike doesn't care much about anything, except Phoebe (Kristen Stewart), his his live-in girlfriend, who's pining for the getaway trip to Hawaii that Mike's airport panic attacks always seem to derail.

Nothing much happens in their sleepy little hamlet of Liman, W.Va. Nothing, that is, until Mike looks up into the sky one night and American Ultra kicks into to crazy high gear with deep government ops, lunatic hit men and two young lovers caught in the middle.

Everything revolves around Mike, who's more complicated and skilled than he realizes—or remembers. And Phoebe turns out to have a surprise or two of her own, too.

Soon, we're up to speed on what Mike pieces together slowly: He's a high-level government "experiment" genetically programmed with deep, long-dormant classified intelligence and lethal self-defense abilities. And higher-ups in the program are worried that he might go rouge, or haywire—or, most problematic of all, expose their body-and-brain games.

It's a weird, wacked-out, sometimes wonderful mash-up of stoner comedy, spy-conspiracy spoof and hyper-violent teen-romance fantasy—think of Eisenberg and Stewart's characters several years down the road from their 2009 collaboration Adventureland, caught between The Bourne Conspiracy and Pineapple Express, and spattered with Oliver Stone's bloody overspray from Natural Born Killers.

Connie Britton from TV's Nashville plays a government operative determined to help Mike evade the efforts of her devious counterpart (Topher Grace), who has marked him for elimination. Walter Goggins from Justified is a cackling killer, Laugher, sent—along with an army of other exterminators—to take him out. The versatile John Leguizamo trades his shirt for a torso swathed in fake tattoos as a local low-life. Bill Pullman is a Washington suit none too happy that one of his "lab rats" is making such a big, noisy mess in the white-trash hills of West Virginia.

Director Nima Nourizadeh, whose only previous movie was the teen-debauchery flop Planet X (2012), sets up the crazy story, but has a hard time getting it out of the grindhouse. But he stages some sock-o action pieces, and one of the coolest things is watching Eisenberg, typically cast as an obsessive-compulsive nerd, break out his license to kill. He's deadly with a spoon, a cup of instant noodles or a package of frozen hamburgers, even if he doesn't realize exactly how, or why.

The humor is dark, the body count high and the blood abundant. But there's a tenderness and a love story behind the mayhem, too, and one final surprise—when Mike and his relentless stalker, Laugher, finally come to blows—will hit you hard in a soft place, in a way you won't see coming.

"Do you feel sick?" Phoebe asks Mike at one point. "No, I feel kind of amazing," he says, reveling in his newfound abilities. In the way-out American Ultra, those two extremes—sick and amazing—somehow don't seem so very far apart.

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Combat Center cooks up taste of Italy

PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. THOMAS MUDD

Lance Cpl. Marco Perry, food service specialist, 1st Tank Battalion, removes Italian sausage and peppers from an oven at Phelps Hall during the Combat Center's Visiting Chef Program at Phelps Hall, Tuesday.

Cpl. Nicholas Casas, bake shop non-commissioned officer, Headquarters Battalion, folds Tiramisu Crepes during the Combat Center's Visiting Chef Program at Phelps Hall, Tuesday. The crepes where topped with whipped cream, fresh fruit and Carmel drizzle.

Lance Cpl. Laquann Dixon, food service specialist, 1st Tank Battalion, prepares Lasagna Bolognese with the assistance of Robert Lafond, certified executive chef, Jack T. Maas Food Group as part of the Combat Center's Visiting Chef Program at Phelps Hall, Tuesday.

Lance Cpl. J'darius Chambers, food service specialist, Headquarters Battalion, reviews the process of cooking Chicken Cacciatorre with Robert Lafond, certified executive chef, Jack T. Maas Food Group, through the Combat Center's Visiting Chef Program at Phelps Hall, Tuesday.

Lance Cpl. J'darius Chambers, food service specialist, Headquarters Battalion, combines the ingredients of Chicken Cacciatorre in a tilt brazier during the Combat Center's Visiting Chef Program at Phelps Hall, Tuesday. Enough food was prepared to feed approximately 400 Marines.

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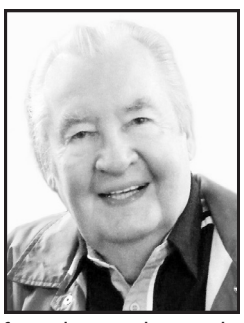
by Lou Gerhardt



I want all of our thousands of readers to know that this column tells it like it really is. I deliberately write about good people, honest people, and strong people. I write about business people I admire and about businesses that deserve to be praised and supported.

Such a man is Thomas K. Huls, proprietor of Big-O-Tires.

Tom is a terrific guy. I liked him the minute I met him. He thoroughly enjoys life and his work. He and his lovely wife Karin live in Yucca Valley. They have four children and 13 grandchildren and spend many hours together as a family.

Tom Huls and his entire team are as good as it gets. John, Paul, Sandy, Tom, Casey, Jose, Dave, Tommy and Tom comprise a great staff.

Big O Tires has been serving the Morongo Basin's automotive needs for 23 years. Owner Tom Hulls, who bought the tire shop seven years ago, points out that Big O does much more than tires. Big O also does brakes, maintenance, fluid exchange, belts, hoses and is a true one-stop shop for your automotive needs.

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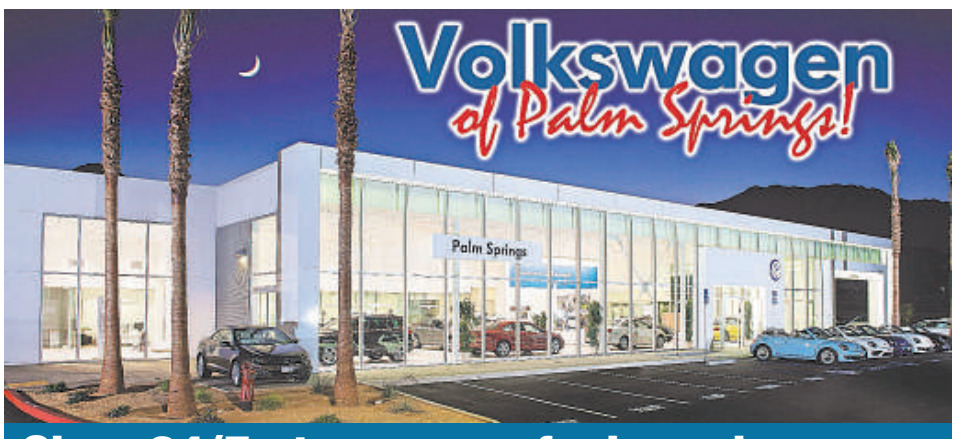

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Defense Secretary Ashton Carter visits Camp Pendleton

The U.S. Secretary of Defense, the honorable Mr. Ashton Carter answers questions about the future of maritime operations from Marines aboard Camp Pendleton Calif., Aug. 27. Carter met with senior military leaders and service members and witnessed ship-to-shore operations, a capability synonymous with Navy and Marine Corps teams in order to assess the need to better support military capabilities.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. SETH STARR

Defense Secretary Ash Carter, visited Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Aug. 27, to observe amphibious landings and meet with senior military leaders and service members.

Carter's visit started with an amphibious raid that targeted a small compound, roughly 500 feet off-shore. Amphibious assault vehicles carrying Marine riflemen departed the USS New Orleans, an amphibious transport dock. The Marines assaulted the beach head as the Secretary observed the scenario from a nearby bluff.

Marines set the pace as the sound of simulated machinegun and rifle fire filled the air. They quickly eliminated simulated threats and took charge of the area.

During the raid, Marines and Sailors demonstrated the joint Navy-Marine Corps partnership by conducting ship-to-shore operations, a capability synonymous with Navy and Marine Corps teams.

Carter noted during the raid that as current situations in the world continue to develop, it is important to keep ahead with an ever changing battlefield.

"Carrying these service members' mission into the strategic future after 15 years of extremely aggressive effort on fronts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, we realize the need to change the full spectrum of how we approach these new conflicts," said Carter. "This means changing and adapting the way the Navy and Marine Corps team trains so that we can face these new conflicts around the world head on."

With change on the horizon, training, equipment, vehicles and other tools become more important aspects for innovative change for both the Navy and Marine Corps with the U.S. building focus on Asia and the Pacific. For example, the 1971-era AAVs that Marines currently use to deploy during amphibious operations are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, operate and sustain.

Carter explained that development of the new Amphibious Combat Vehicle provides a much more robust and flexible capability solution for the evolution of amphibious operation.

The implementation of these kinds of changes and innovations directly affect the mission of the Navy and Marine Corps enabling both to be a critical maritime power and crisis response team.

Following the raid, Secretary Carter opened up for questions from service members and media outlets about what the future holds for the nation's maritime forces in addition to innovative solutions toward anti-access and area denial measures.

The day's events demonstrated the need to sustain and upgrade the AAV fleet while developing the ACV in order to modernize our ship-to-shore capabilities, as well as give senior leadership an opportunity to voice their opinions on how to keep the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy America's number one fighting force.

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