



LANCE CPL. SAMANTHA TORRES

In keeping with the Department of Defense's tobacco policy, the Combat Center, began matching the tobacco prices with those of the surrounding community, Saturday.

## Combat Center matches tobacco tax increase

STORY BY LANCE CPL. CHRISTIAN LOPEZ AND LANCE CPL. NATALIA CUEVAS

In keeping with the policy memorandum 16-001, Department of Defense Tobacco Policy, the

Under Proposition 56, a tobacco tax increase initiative was voted into law in November which caused tobacco taxes to increase by triple the amount in the state of California.

California's tobacco tax increase has also affected other tobacco and all vaping products. According to the state's Public Health Department, the tax hike is projected to accumulate approximately \$1.4 billion in its first year, with half of the revenues going toward Medi-Cal, a health plan for low-income households funded

**“Tobacco use is one of the leading causes negatively affecting combat readiness. It's our job to help Marines get over stress and make sure they're ready to meet their mission.”**

~ Martha Hunt

Combat Center began matching the tobacco prices with those of the surrounding community, Saturday.

See **Tobacco A4**



CPL. PAUL PETERSON

In keeping with the Department of Defense's tobacco policy, the Combat Center, began matching the tobacco prices with those of the surrounding community, Saturday.

## ITX for Spouses: A day in the life of a Marine

STORY BY SGT. CONNOR HANCOCK

The Combat Center hosted an Integrated Training Exercise for Spouses aboard the Combat Center, March 30, where spouses and significant others of Marines and sailors from a variety of Combat Center units got to experience a day in the life of a Marine.

Marine Corps Community Services, Lifestyle Insights Networking Knowledge Skills, and



SGT. CONNOR HANCOCK

Melvin Harris, counter Improvised Explosive Device instructor, Marine Corps Engineer School, teaches Annie Smack, wife of Gunnery Sgt. Eric Smack, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, how to sweep for IEDs at Range 800 aboard the Combat Center, March 30.

Government and External Affairs, G-5 hosted a group of 38 participants during the ITX for Spouses event. The group visited training areas including Range 800, where they learned the basics of countering

See **Spouses A4**



SGT. CONNOR HANCOCK

Dave Andrew, counter Improvised Explosive Device instructor, Marine Corps Engineer School, teaches ITX for Spouses participants how to use a Holley stick at Range 800 aboard the Combat Center, March 30. The Holley stick is a tool used exclusively by Marine Corps explosive ordnance disposal technicians that provides them with the capability to investigate and manipulate a suspect IED from a stand-off distance.

### Inside the Observation Post

Volume 61, Issue 13

- A2..... Combat Center History
- A3..... What I've Learned
- A4..... Wood Hobby Shop
- A5..... 1st Tanks FabLab
- A8..... TRACRS release
- B1..... Marine Corps Spouse of the Year
- B2..... Movie Schedule
- B4..... Earth Day Extravaganza



**Jessica Rudd is Armed Forces Insurance Marine Spouse of the Year**

See page B1

## 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 Lance Cpl. Sarah Stegall.



Gunnery Sgt. Mayra Garcia, senior drill instructor, Platoon 4011, 4th Battalion, Recruit Training Regiment, returns her sword to her scabbard during a final drill evaluation at Peatross parade deck on Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., March 22. The recruits are scored for final drill according to confidence, attention to detail, and discipline.

# Combat Center officials, SBCSD coordinate murder suspect arrest

Combat Center Naval Criminal Investigative Service assisted San Bernardino County Sherriff's Department with the arrest of Lance Cpl. Rafael Aikens, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, March 30, in connection with a double homicide, which took place off base in Twentynine Palms, Calif., March 24.

After the victims were identified and a witness provided a physical description of the suspect, SBCSD requested NCIS' assistance with gathering additional evidence in

support of the investigation. Due to NCIS' diligent coordination with SBCSD, NCIS successfully arrested Aikens from his barracks, located aboard the Combat Center. Aikens is currently being detained at the West Valley Detention Center under a \$2 million bail.

**Releasable Information:**  
 • Name: Aikens, Rafael A.  
 • Rank: Lance Corporal  
 • Military Occupational Specialty: 0331 - Machine Gunner  
 • Awards: Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Inherent

Resolve Campaign Ribbon, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Letter of Appreciation

• Date of Rank: November 1, 2015  
 • Date of Enlistment: December 16, 2014  
 • End of Active Service: December 15, 2018  
 • Unit: 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division  
 • Deployment History: April 6, 2016 to September 23, 2016 Operation Inherent Resolve


## CROSSWORD

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- Across**
- Island rings
  - Cut, maybe
  - Perry Como's " \_\_\_ Loves Mambo"
  - Money in the bank, say
  - Kosher \_\_\_
  - "Our Time in \_\_\_" (10,000 Maniacs album)
  - Flat
  - Acquire
  - Perlman of "Cheers"
  - Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930-74
  - In-flight info, for short
  - "A jealous mistress": Emerson
  - \_\_\_-cochere (carriage entrance)
  - To listen again
  - Exchange (2 wds)
  - Parenthesis, essentially
  - Cow, maybe
  - "20,000 Leagues" harpooner \_\_\_ Land
  - Battleship with high caliber guns
  - Not just "a"
  - Be in session
  - Caribbean, e.g.
  - An end result

- Smaller
  - Form of belief involving sorcery
  - Flipper
  - Artist's asset
  - Volunteer street guard near schools
  - Buddy
  - Make, as money
  - "Sesame Street" Muppet
  - \_\_\_ vera
  - "... or \_\_\_!"
  - Pirate's pal
  - Beach bird
  - After deductions (var. spelling)
  - Ditch
- Down**
- One who cracks a whip
  - Heir's concern
  - "Four Essays on Liberty" author Berlin
  - Unload, as stock
  - Garden tools
  - Gave out
  - Hip bones
  - Anchovy containers
  - Era
  - Follower
  - \_\_\_ Dee River

- " \_\_\_ Ng" (They Might Be Giants song)
- Golf ball support
- It bites
- Marienbad, for one
- 20-20, e.g.
- Armageddon
- Ring bearer, maybe
- " \_\_\_ we having fun yet?"
- Couple
- To utilize again
- Queen, maybe
- Smoke \_\_\_\_\_
- Conk out
- " \_\_\_ lost!"
- Pillbox, e.g.
- " \_\_\_ bad!"
- Airline's home base
- To lean or sway to one side
- "Look here!"
- Small Old World finch
- Shack (hyphenated)
- Nests of large birds
- Fly-by-night?
- Blue-ribbon position
- Caught in the act
- Ad headline
- Beauty
- \_\_\_-Altaic languages
- "Welcome" site
- A pint, maybe



Reprinted from the Observation Post  
April 10, 1962

## Vehicle training aid slated for students

Three 2½-ton, 6x6 M-35 surveyed trucks are presently being stripped down in hopes of obtaining a complete running vehicle that will be used as a training aid for the Force Troop Drivers School.

According to Maj. Kenneth M. Buss, Force Troops, Motor Transport Officer, five men; Gunnery Sgt. William J. McSparrin, Sgt. William R. Heriot, Pfc. Larry D. Nuckols, Pvt. Dennis McVey of Headquarters Company, Force Troops and Pvt. Andrew Rivera of Maintenance Company, Support Battalion, are busy stripping the vehicle.

**Trucks**

The three vehicles were brought aboard base to be used as targets on the various firing ranges. It is expected that a single running truck may be compounded from the three surveyed trucks.

The three Marines, Nuckols, McVey and Rivera, are all basic mechanics and the experience, approximately 50 years, that the men are receiving under the instructors is expected to be of great value to the men, according to the major.

**Finished wheels**

"The finished vehicle, which will be used as the training aid, will be made at no cost to the government as all the parts were taken from the surveyed vehicles, which would have been destroyed at the ranges," expressed Maj. Buss. When finished, the truck will have colored coated fuel lines, brake lines and various other colored pieces. The pieces will then demonstrate the movement of each piece of apparatus and show how they work with one another.

## SUDOKU

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**Medium**

*Last week's answers*

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## WHAT I'VE LEARNED

# Daniel FLORES

Soldotna, Alaska Corporal, ground radio repair technician, 1st Tank Battalion

FLORES WAS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2016 INNOVATION CHALLENGE FOR THE CREATION OF HIS MULTI-PURPOSE CABLE UNIT. HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON INNOVATING NEW, MORE EFFICIENT TECHNOLOGIES.

**>I'm from** Soldotna, Alaska. It's more rural, there were maybe 5,000 people from my hometown.

**>I grew up with a** relatively normal sized family. I have an older brother, a younger brother and then my parents. We were a pretty close family. My dad owns a fishing business in Alaska so we helped out with the business a lot growing up. I hope to be a part of it someday.

**>All three of us brothers** joined the Marine Corps. My older brother is a sergeant with [Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard] and my little brother is part of the aircrew on CH-53's. Our parents love that we're all in, doing something we love.

**>Both of my grandparent's on** my dad's side were in the military. My grandma was in the Marine Corps way back in the day, about 20 years after Opha Mae Johnson joined and my grandfather was an engineer in the Army, he built runways over in Germany. Then my grandfather on my mom's side was in the Army over in Korea.

**>We weren't super pushed** toward military service. My parents just wanted to make sure that we had a plan. My mom always wanted one of us to go to college and be a doctor or lawyer or something big, but that's not really what we wanted to do.

**>I always had an** interest in joining the military, but my brother influenced me to join the Marines. I wasn't ready for college, but I needed to do something and the military is something that's important to me.

**>The camaraderie and the** patriotism is what drew me in to the military; I wanted to do my part. When I was younger, I heard about 9/11 and the resulting wars and that resonated with me. I thought "I want to help, I want to do something." Even if I'm not getting deployed I'm still able to support the effort.

**>I chose** ground electronics as my [military occupational specialty] because electronics have always come easy to me. I can understand them and it's just kind of second nature.

**>I get to explore a lot** with my MOS. I get to experiment with different things and test new systems that will make my MOS more efficient as far as communication goes. I get to come down to the FabLab and try some things out.



**>I took metal shop all** four years of high school and then I took the general electronics class. I liked the freedom to design what you wanted. With metal working and electronics you don't have to build a certain thing. You can create what you want to and explore a little bit more.

**>The coolest thing we** ever built in high school was a dune buggy. We used the engine from a Volkswagen Bug and we built one out of a steel frame and it could do wheelies. It had seven seats on it, there were two seats on the front, two seats on the side above each wheel and then three seats in the back. This thing looked crazy. In the center seat you had a little lever, and those three seats were on a slide bar, so it slid all three people's weight back and threw the entire thing up on a wheelie. It's the metal shop's mascot now.

**>My favorite thing I** built for the Marine Corps was the cable test box. It makes it more efficient and more affordable to test certain cables in the tank. It saves a lot of time and effort.

I wanted to make a more efficient process because the one now takes almost a full day, and with the cable test box, it takes 15 minutes.

**>Growing up our** parents were very supportive of us in every way. They never said you have to do this. They told us to figure out what we want to do and go for it. They raised us with the mentality of if you put your mind to it you'll get it.

**>I love fishing, hunting** and anything outdoors. I love being outside; I like the freedom. You're going out on your own and you're also getting food that you know where it's coming from. In Alaska, we're pretty big on the sustainable food so going out and getting your own food, knowing where it's coming from and having the knowledge that you worked for your food instills a sense of pride.

**>Fishing and hunting** always takes patience, but it's always worth it in the end because you're putting food on the table. Growing up we never bought any meat. We're a big hunting family, there

aren't many families who don't hunt in Alaska.

**>I wrestled in high school** and I played a little bit of football. So staying active has stayed a huge part of my life. Wrestling was my favorite sport because it was more of a who's better thing. You're putting your all in to it. It's not so much a team effort, it's how well you can do as a person. It's the warrior mentality, you have to earn it.

**>My favorite thing about** being in the Marine Corps is the bond I share with any Marine, anywhere. You can get along with them. It's the brotherhood or sisterhood that you don't really see anywhere else. Everybody's backing you, and everyone backs each other.

**>If I had to give** life advice to someone it would be you're going to make mistakes in your life and you're going to be stronger for it. There's no set standard to life, you don't have to do anything someone wants you to do, you can forge your own path.

Interviewed and photographed by Cpl. Medina Ayala-Lo

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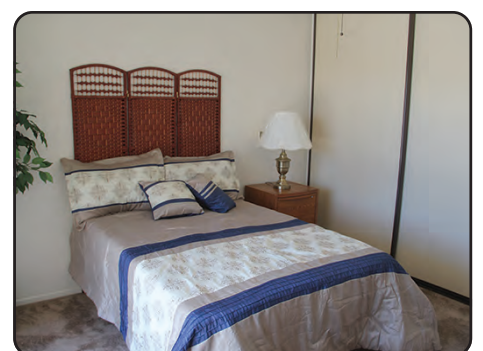
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# Wood Hobby Shop holds new hours

STORY BY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The Combat Center's Wood Hobby Shop provides Marines, sailors and family members, above the age of 16, with the tools and the assistance needed to create anything they set their minds to.

Currently the Wood Hobby Shop hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Starting April 12, they will operate under new hours. It will be

open from Wednesday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"Here at the Wood Hobby Shop, we have all the tools the guys are going to need from start to finish," said Robert Henry, recreation safety specialist supervisor, Marine Corps Community Services. "Literally any project you can think of can be done here."

The projects made at the shop vary from simple plaques, awards and cutting boards to more com-

plex woodwork designs such as kayaks, wooden chests and bed frames.

"Since I was stationed here I've made a bed frame, two nightstands and a wooden box," said 1st Lt. Kyle Repetti, platoon commander, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School. "It is definitely a good hobby and a way to help out your command. I've worked on several projects for going away and retirement presents. It's a whole lot cheaper than having

to buy a present."

For those interested in wood-working, the shop has tools needed to build, repair or modify their own wooden crafts and hobby items.

"It's usually cheaper to build your bookshelf or your entertainment center than it is to buy it," Henry said. "You're the one that built it so you know how it's constructed and you know how to fix it."

Even the simplest of designs can test one's problem solving

skills and for many it's a great way to keep their mind active during off hours.

"It's a healthy alternative to sitting in the barracks and playing video games," said Carl Vanderzee, family readiness officer, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374. "As far as a hobby, it helps you develop skills and it's just great knowledge to have."

For more information about the Wood Hobby Shop, located at Building 1342, contact 830-7214.

## Spouses From A1



SGT. CONNOR HANCOCK

Andrew Mauk, counter Improvised Explosive Device instructor, Marine Corps Engineer School, teaches ITX for Spouses participants how to sweep for IEDs at Range 800 aboard the Combat Center, March 30.



SGT. CONNOR HANCOCK

Adam Clancy, operations officer and tour manager, Government and External Affairs (G-5), escorts ITX for Spouses participants through Range 220 aboard the Combat Center, March 30.

Improvised Explosive Devices, the Combat Convoy Simulator and Range 220, the largest Military Operations on Urban Terrain facility in the Marine Corps.

According to Barbara Cortez, participant, touring Range 220 helped her understand the environment her husband may have seen during his deployments in Iraq.

"It gives me a better idea of what it was like for him," Cortez said. "I learned a lot of information that my husband has not shared with me. Overall, I've had a lot of fun and really enjoyed myself."

Melvin Harris, counter IED instructor, Marine Corps Engineer School, took the lead in educating the participants at Range 800. According to Harris, it's important for family members to get hands-on experience to see what their Marines or sailors might be doing.

"It's a lot different than sitting around a dinner table and explaining

what we do," Harris said. "When a spouse actually sees what their Marines do, the lightbulbs go off and they can talk about it. Wherever we can get spouses out to events like this, I think it benefits the Marine Corps and improves the whole family dynamic."

At the Combat Convoy Simulator, located at the Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson, participants also had the opportunity to drive vehicles in a simulated convoy and operate simulated .50-caliber machine guns, M-4 and M-16 rifles.

"If you have the opportunity to do it, go ahead and do it," said Yvonne Slliz, participant. "It's a good eye-opener, especially for new spouses or those new to the military."

The ITX for Spouses program is planning another event in the fall. Anyone interested in participating can call Nicole Horta at (760) 830-1696 for more information.

## Tobacco From A1

by the state and federal government.

The DoD tobacco policy requires that prices in the United States, including territories and possessions, match the prevailing local price in the community. The price is also set at a level that includes the tax rates in the local community. That means the price of tobacco products aboard installations will be similar to the final price of those same items at civilian retailers, which will discourage service members from purchasing tobacco products.

"Tobacco use is one of the leading causes negatively affecting combat readiness," said Martha Hunt, health promotion coordinator, Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital. "It's our job to help Marines get over stress and make sure they're ready to meet their mission."

The Naval Hospital offers free tobacco cessation coaching for Combat Center Marines, sailors and family members. For more information on how to quit tobacco use, call (760) 830-2814, 1-(800)-QUIT-NOW or visit www.med.navy.mil.

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Mutual Ministry 3rd Fri of the month 9:00 a.m.

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Mutual Ministry 3rd Fri of the month 9:00 a.m.

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760-367-9269  
www.ipoputheran.org

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Pastor Titus R. Burns  
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Wednesday Night Bible Study 7:00 PM  
Call 760-367-4185 for more information

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38

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Sun. Service 9:30 10:30 1:30  
Wed. 6pm

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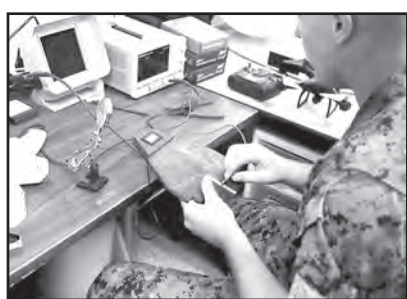
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Cpl. Robert Murray, tank commander, Bravo Co., 1st Tank Battalion, tests his fire circuit tester at the Fabrication Laboratory aboard the Combat Center, March 29.



Capt. Zachary Weisenfels, left, officer in charge, Fabrication Laboratory, explains the capabilities of the FabLab to Maj. Gen. Daniel O'Donohue, Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, during a visit to the Combat Center, March 29. The newly established FabLab is the first of its kind in the Marine Corps and will provide Marines and sailors the opportunity to develop avant-garde solutions to common problems through utilizing 3D printing technology.

# 1st MarDiv CG visits Combat Center

# FAB LAB

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

**M**aj. Gen. Daniel O'Donohue, Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, viewed the innovative capabilities of the Combat Center's Fabrication Laboratory during a visit to the base, March 29.

The newly-established FabLab is the first of its kind in the Marine Corps and will provide Marines and sailors the opportunity to develop avant-garde solutions to common problems through utilizing 3D printing technology.

"I would say the work put in to establishing the FabLab is already paying off and we haven't even officially opened our doors yet," said Capt. Zachary Weisenfels, officer-in-charge, FabLab. "It's pretty cool to have people come in here who have never done any sort of design, who have never played with electronics to go from week one, not even knowing what a laser cutter is, to by the end of the third week, making machines that draw pictures, or making airplanes."

During his visit,

O'Donohue was briefed on the various capabilities of the FabLab to include 3D printing machines, a laser cutter and a ShopBot CNC router. He was also introduced to Cpl. Robert Murray, tank commander, Bravo Co., 1st Tank Battalion, who invented a functional fire circuit tester.

"The fire circuit tester we currently have is an incandescent light bulb and it tests how many volts go through to the firing pin," Murray said. "I wanted to create something that was more accurate in telling the tankers how many volts were actually going to their firing pin so I decided to incorporate a digital meter that reads how many volts are actually getting to the firing pin. I see the value in it because it does the exact same test for a sixth of



Petty Officer 2nd Class Leyla Coba, cryptologic technician technical, and Cpl. Dylan Lemaistre, signals intelligence and electronic warfare, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, carve out the wing of a drone at the Fabrication Laboratory aboard the Combat Center, March 29.

the price of our current fire circuit tester."

Once the doors officially open, the laboratory will be open to everyone who is affiliated with the Department of Defense on a first-come,

first-served basis.

"I think having a central location where people can come and learn is going to be really helpful. For the Marine Corps as a whole, I think the biggest thing we're doing

is opening eyes. Marines are smart and any problem you put in front of a Marine they are going to solve it," Weisenfels said. "The fact that this place exists is a big win for the Marine Corps. In the long

run, it's going to save time, money and produce innovative solutions. I just hope that after seeing this FabLab up and running that it expands to installations throughout the Corps."

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# TRACRS makes 2nd tortoise release

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. DAVE FLORES

The Combat Center's Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs division completed its second release of juvenile desert tortoises from the Tortoise Research and Captive Rearing Site March 14 through 17, 2017.

Biologists with the head start program, an initiative implemented by NREA in 2006 in partnership with University of California, Los Angeles, released 50 tortoises, who were hatched at the facility approximately nine years earlier, into the Sandhill non-live fire training area. The release of these tortoises is in no connection to desert tortoise translocation efforts that will serve as a mitigation effort in support of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014, and is slated to take place at a later time.

TRACRS' first release of 35 large juveniles occurred in September 2015. The tortoises released in 2015 have maintained a survival rate which is 10 percent higher than the average survival rate of tortoises raised in the wild. Biologists closely monitor each animal via Global Positioning System tracking for years after their release.

The Combat Center established the program to assess how to protect nests, hatchlings and juveniles until they grow resilient enough to endure the harsh physical environment, better fend off predation by Common Ravens and Coyotes, and mature to fully-functional adults who can produce offspring that will further bolster the population. NREA will continue with periodic releases

until the remaining 390 tortoises have grown large enough to fend off predators and can be released into the wild.

"The primary factor here is that the TRACRS fencing and netting keeps out nearly all predators that would kill and eat tortoise eggs, neonates, hatchlings and small juveniles," said Dr. Ken Nagy, research professor, UCLA. "Secondly, TRACRS is irrigated when necessary to achieve a natural rainfall regiment typical of a 'good rainfall' year during every year, so that food plants are available every year, on a regular seasonal schedule."

Once the juveniles are released, they are tracked and monitored weekly via transmitted signals using directional antennas and receivers until they retreat underground for their winter dormancy period. Tracking continues during those months and picks up more frequently once the tortoises become active above ground in



LANCE CPL. DAVE FLORES

Mary Lane Poe, biologist, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, feeds the juvenile tortoises too young to be released at the enclosures at the Headstart facility at the Tortoise Research and Captive Rearing Site aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., April 5, 2017. TRACRS released 50 juvenile tortoises in March. The program was designed to find effective ways to increase the population of the tortoises on and around the installation as well as to solve potential problems wild tortoises face today.

the warmer months.

Nagy said this monitoring will continue for many years in support

of researching and supporting the recovery of the threatened Desert Tortoise species.



LANCE CPL. DAVE FLORES

Thelma and Louise, a pair of captive female desert tortoises who live at the Tortoise Research and Captive Rearing Site and serve as ambassadors for educational programs conducted by Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, munch on escarole in their enclosures at the head start facility aboard the Combat Center, April 5. Wild tortoises being raised at the head start facility pending release back in the wild when they are strong enough to withstand predators, eat natural vegetation in their enclosures. In March, 50 juvenile tortoises were released.



LANCE CPL. DAVE FLORES

Mary Lane Poe, biologist, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, tracks released desert tortoises using directional antennas and receivers at Sand Hill training area aboard the Combat Center, April 5. The release of 50 juvenile tortoise from the Tortoise Research and Captive Rearing Site occurred in March. The program was designed to find effective ways to increase the population of the tortoises on and around the installation as well as solve potential problems that wild tortoises face today.

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# Best of the best: Combat Center spouse wins 2017 Marine Spouse of the Year

STORY AND PHOTOS  
 BY CPL. MEDINA  
 AYALA-LO

Selflessness is embodied when one is more concerned with the needs and wishes of others than with their own. An act of selflessness can be as simple as holding the door for a stranger or as heroic as facing danger to protect a fellow comrade. Jessica Rudd, a Marine veteran, wife and mother of three, exemplifies selflessness in all that she does.

Jessica, one of the Combat Center's very own and the wife of 1st Lt. Andrew Rudd, executive officer, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, was selected as the Armed Forces Insurance Marine Spouse of the Year 2017 presented by "Military Spouse Magazine", February 24.

The Military Spouse of the Year award was founded by "Military Spouse Magazine" in 2008 to honor military spouses of all ranks and from all branches of service. MSOY recognizes military spouses' contributions and unwavering commitment to the military community and our country. Throughout her 11 years as a military spouse, Jessica has volunteered her free time to both military and civilian causes. But her altruistic spirit was forged years before she was inducted into the lifestyle of the Marine Corps.

## Humble beginnings

Raised in the mid-western city of Columbus, Ohio, by her devoted mother and father Jessica developed a sense of duty from an early age.

"We come from a Christian family, and I'm the oldest of five," she said. "I think that's always kind of instilled a lot of leadership and responsibility because there have always been younger kids who look up to me in the family."

For Jessica, being a leader has always felt natural. Whether it's in the civilian or military world, helping others has always been a part of her life.

"Trying to help people and learn about the community is just something that I've always been interested in," Jessica said.

## Marine Corps roots

Following her graduation from high school, Jessica went on to college with a determination to become the first in her family to graduate; a milestone she later accomplished. Little did she know, she would soon meet the man who inspired her to greatness.

"We first met through a mutual friend back in 2005. I was with the band at the time and she was a college student. Very quickly we became good friends," Andrew said of his then girlfriend. "She's driven. Whatever it is, she goes all in. She has a desire to serve people, a desire to please people and a desire to work for others. It doesn't really matter what it is, she just cares."

The couple married in



Aubrey Rudd, 7 years old, daughter of Jessica Rudd, Armed Forces Insurance Marine Spouse of the Year 2017 presented by Military Spouse Magazine, chooses a book to read to her little sister Molly, 10 months old, at their home in Yucca Valley, Calif., March 29. Jessica, a Marine veteran, wife and mother of three, was chosen as the 2017 MSOY for her dedication to helping improve the quality of life of military members and their spouses.



Aubrey Rudd, 7 years old, daughter of Jessica Rudd, Armed Forces Insurance Marine Spouse of the Year 2017 presented by Military Spouse Magazine, draws a photo of herself and her younger sister, Molly, 10 months old, at their home in Yucca Valley, Calif., March 29.

March 2006. It was while finishing her freshman year of college and preparing for a move to San Diego, Calif., with her newly-betrothed that Jessica was inspired to make a bold and unexpected move. She enlisted.

"I didn't tell my husband I was planning on joining the Marine Corps," she said. "I called him one day and I told him that I'd gone to see a recruiter. Initially he was shocked but then he said, 'If you're going to do this, you're going to do this right.'"

"Knowing her, there wasn't going to be any talking her out of it," Andrew commented. "So very quickly we changed gears and I began to help her prepare for boot camp."

Being around her husband and learning about what the Marine Corps lifestyle entailed is what ultimately inspired her to join.

"The thing I liked most about the Marine Corps was the challenge," Jessica said. "If I do something, I go all in and I knew from the beginning that if I was going to do anything service-related with our military and country it was going to be what I and the American people think is the best."

After one deployment, one meritorious promotion and four years of honorable service, Jessica completed her tour of active duty, ready to uncover what the world had to offer.

## Continuing to serve

Having been on both sides of the coin, Jessica was accustomed to moving from installation to installation. Once she and her family arrived at the Combat Center Jessica knew that she wanted to remain involved in the illustrious institution that had come to mean so much to her. But this time, in a different capacity.

"When I first got here, I really wanted to do something that impacted the Marines and spouses directly," Jessica said.

Right away, she contacted the family readiness officer for her husband's unit and became involved.

"Mrs. Rudd has been involved with the unit for three years," said Gunnery Sgt. Aron Cottman, FRO, 3/11. "She was one of the first FRO volunteers I interacted with, who let me know what goes on with the FRO program when I was taking over. She is my go-to person for just about anything."

According to Cottman, Jessica is extremely active in her support for military families. Because of the negative stigma that is sometimes attached to being stationed aboard the Combat Center, she makes a point of welcoming new spouses and remaining involved in the unit's community.

"Jessie goes above and beyond and she's been on both sides of the equation," Cottman said. "She's been an active-duty Marine in addition to being the



Jessica Rudd, Armed Forces Insurance Marine Spouse of the Year 2017 presented by Military Spouse Magazine, helps her youngest daughter, Molly, 10 months old, stand up at their home in Yucca Valley, Calif., March 29.

spouse of one. She's really been around the entirety of the Marine Corps and as a result is able to translate that experience into a relevant experience for the spouses of the unit."

In addition to her work with the unit, Jessica is an advocate for home schooling resources within the local community.

"I'm on the board for a local home school group," she said. "I'm very passionate about homeschooling resources, different groups and trying to streamline different resources for military children."

The Rudds' motivation behind homeschooling their children was simple; they can remain involved in their children's education while remaining flexible to the demands of a military lifestyle.

"One thing we enjoy about homeschooling is we have the final say on what is being taught and how it's being taught," Jessica said. "We have a controlled environment for the kids and it's a better kind of school system to work around with our not very traditional career of being

in the military."

## The Corps' best

According to "Military Spouse Magazine", more than a million military spouses support and maintain the home front while their service members defend the nation. The program receives nominations from the military community and all Americans. There are three phases of voting, culminating in the announcement of the MSOY at an annual awards luncheon in Washington, D.C., in early May. Although Jessica hasn't secured the win for the Department of Defense-wide MSOY award, being chosen as the 2107 Marine Spouse is an honor that she is grateful to have obtained and to those who know and love her, there is no one more deserving.

"She's absolutely willing to do whatever it is to take care of another spouse or young Marine," Andrew said. "I had a young Marine getting ready to move his wife and child here. Immediately, Jessica wanted to know if he had

furniture, appliances and items to take care of the baby. Within a day, she got a bedroom set for this Marine, pots and pans, dishes, a couch, a TV, a box full of toys for the child. Within a day."

"She just started pulling resources from here, there and everywhere and she goes 'Alright, get a truck and a trailer and let's get this over to this Marine's house.' She has a drive and a determination that just blows me out of the water."

During the announcement of the MSOY, Congressional members, senior military, DoD leadership and military spouses from all over the world will gather to see who is chosen for the prestigious honor.

"The spouse can be the unsung hero of a Marine's success and at times a catalyst for their accomplishments," Cottman said. "When you have a positive environment at home, that can go a long way to increasing a Marine's efficiency, their overall experience as a Marine and their ability to accomplish the mission should we be called upon."







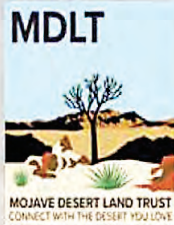
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**COMMUNITY NEEDS FORUMS**  
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Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County (CAPSBC) is inviting low-income residents and other interested participants to attend one of our Community Needs Forums being held throughout the county. The purpose of the Forums is to gather input on conditions and causes of poverty, the needs of the low-income community, and to identify programs addressing those needs. All testimony will be included in CAPSBC's 2018-2019 Community Action Plan which prioritizes agency resources.



For more information contact Sandra Brown at Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County at (909) 723-1534

Forum Locations, Dates & Times	
<b>April 17<sup>th</sup> 2017, 2:00 - 4:00 PM</b> Ecclesia Christian Fellowship Church 1314 E. Date St. San Bernardino, CA 92404	<b>April 19<sup>th</sup> 2017, 11:00 - 12:30 PM</b> Hook Community Center 14973 Joshua St. Victorville, CA 92394
<b>April 18<sup>th</sup> 2017, 1:00 - 3:00 PM</b> Joshua Tree Sportsman Club 6225 Sunburst Ave. Joshua Tree, CA 92322	<b>April 20<sup>th</sup> 2017, 1:00 - 3:00 PM</b> Cucamonga Christian Fellowship 11376 5th St. Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
<b>April 21<sup>st</sup> 2017, 1:30 - 3:00 PM</b> Redeemer Lutheran Church 920 W. 6th St. Ontario, CA 91762	

CAPSBC is the designated Community Action Agency for San Bernardino County charged with providing programs and services for low-income individuals and families to help lift them out of poverty. We are also serving San Bernardino County since 1965. As one of the largest non-profit human services agencies in San Bernardino County, CAPSBC provides resources and opportunities to the low-income to improve their lives, contribute to their communities and offer a return on investment for our communities, city and county. Programs include: Weatherization, Home Energy Assistance, Family Development, Adult Education, Individual Development Accounts, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, and the CAPS Food Bank. Please call 909-723-1500 or e-mail [info@capsbc.org](mailto:info@capsbc.org) or visit our website [www.capsbc.org](http://www.capsbc.org) for more information.



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