

OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

APRIL 3, 2009

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

VOL. 52 ISSUE 13

2/7 Marine awarded highest Navy honor

PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Lance Cpl. Brady Gustafson's parents describe him as "reserved, loyal, stubborn and determined."

This was proven in action July 21, 2008.

His loyalty to his fellow Marines, his stubborn nature when he refused medical treatment and his determination under enemy fire as a machine gunner with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment earned him the Navy Cross, and a place among the ranks of such Marine Corps legends as Lewis 'Chesty' Puller, Daniel 'Dan' Daly and John Basilone.

He received this medal, the highest awarded by the Navy, for his deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Navy Cross was pinned on his chest by Lt. Col. John M. Reed, the commanding officer of 2/7, and meritorious corporal chevrons to his collar by Maj. Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser and Sgt. Maj. Randall Carter, the commanding general and sergeant major of 1st Marine Division, at a ceremony held March 27 at Lance Cpl.

Torrey L. Grey Field. The ceremony included speeches from his former and current commanding officers.

Gustafson accepted his medal at a perfect position of attention, despite missing his right leg below the knee. His entire battalion was in attendance as well as Marines from across the nation, former service members,

family and friends.

According to eyewitness

"F---, if it wasn't for everyone else out there, I wouldn't have made it."

accounts, Gustafson's actions that fateful day in July 2008 met and

exceeded the requirements for a Navy Cross.

On July 21 Gustafson was manning the turret of the lead vehicle, a mine resistant ambush protected vehicle, or MRAP, during a four-vehicle mounted patrol riding through the streets of Shewan, Afghanistan.

That's when things got ugly. The patrol came under heavy fire from machine guns as well as rocket-propelled grenades from hidden insurgent positions.

One of the RPGs hit Gustafson's MRAP, piercing its armor, rendering the driver unconscious and partially amputating Gustafson's right leg.

Despite his injuries, Gustafson remained vigilant on his M240B machine gun, locating and accurately firing on several insurgent positions, some as close as 20 meters from the vehicle.

He remained in the turret, reloading twice and firing over 600 rounds, while Lance Cpl. Cody Comstock, an Anderson, Ind. native, applied a tourniquet to his leg. After regaining consciousness, the driver, Cpl. Geoffrey Kamp, an Indianapolis native, put the vehicle in reverse and pushed the disabled vehicle behind them out of the kill zone.

Not until both vehicles were safe from the heavy insurgent fire and all

See NAVY CROSS, A8



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Lance Cpl. Brady Gustafson, a machine gunner with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, stands in front of the battalion at perfect parade rest, despite the amputation of his right leg below the knee. Gustafson received the Navy Cross and a meritorious promotion to a ceremony March 27 at Lance Cpl. Torrey Grey Field.

Congressman visits Combat Center, likes what he sees

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center hosted a tour Saturday to show a visiting congressman the current training areas of the base and the upgrades and changes that have been made since his last visit.

Congressman Ken Calvert, a republican member of the

United States House of Representatives since 1993, representing California's 44th congressional district, said he had not visited the base for quite some time, and was curious to the changes that have been implemented throughout the years.

"We heard about the new training facilities and I wanted to see them," said Calvert, whose district is part of

Southern California.

At the beginning of the tour, James Ricker, the Community Plans and Liaison officer, held a brief at the command deck that explained the importance of the base and how all the training areas impact the Marines and sailors who are deploying. Calvert then visited

See TOUR, A6



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Ken Calvert, a member of the United States House of Representatives since 1993, is given a tour of Camp Wilson's dining facilities by Col. Michael Callaghan, the officer in charge of Mojave Viper's Support Detachment March 28.

3rd LAR sprints into cross training

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Company E, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance battalion, cross trained their light armored vehicle crewmen in the job of infantry scouts, or "ground pounders" in a week-long field operation that began Tuesday and concludes today.

"What we've been doing this week is training LAV crewmen to perform in an environment where they're outside of their vehicles," said 1st Lt. Aryn Vastola, a platoon commander with Company E and a West Palm Beach, Fla., native.

"We know we always go into battle with an LAV," he said. "But it is vital to us that we learn how to conduct our mission in a dismounted way."

The main portion of the training consisted of Marines performing buddy rushes, where they support one another with cover-fire as they assault an enemy position.

During the buddy rushes the Marines conducted live-fire maneuvers with the M-4 carbine rifle and the M249 squad automatic

See 3RD LAR, A8



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Sterling Baker, a light armored vehicle crewman with Company E, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, begins his portion of the buddy rush. The newest company in 3rd LAR conducted cross training to teach their Marines to fight outside their vehicles.



Rock 'n' Roll High School
See A4



Sliding into new playground
See A5



Lt. Dan Band rocks out - See B1



Aaron's in deep - See B1

Combat Center prepares for Earth Day

On April 22, 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day, led a rally that sparked the beginning of the modern environmental movement. Over 20 million people participated on that day to raise awareness about environmental issues. Since 1970, Earth Day has spread all over the planet. According to Earth Day Network, a nonprofit organization that coordinates Earth Day activities, more than 1 billion people are involved in Earth Day activities. This year the Combat Center will be celebrating Earth Day and its 39th anniversary. The theme is "Sustaining our Environment, Protecting our Freedom".

The activities include:

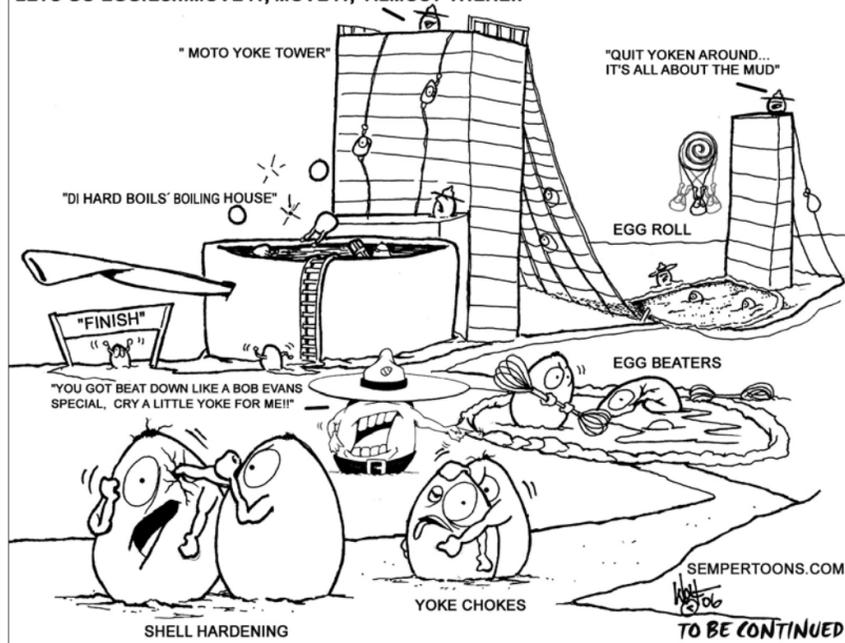
- The Combat Center's Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs participating in the Yucca Valley Conservation Fair & Earth Day Celebration 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. April 18.
- Tours of the Curation Center for fourth through eighth-grade students attending the Child Development Center
- NREA will conduct environmental projects and presentations at the Child Development Center and ASYMCA April 20 -24.
- Base-wide Beautification Clean-up for all personnel and their families April 20-24.

April 22 Earth Day Activities

- NREA will distribute reusable bags with Earth Day Fact Sheets at the Commissary and Main Exchange from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- For more information on how you can become involved in Earth Day activities please call Kaprece James, the Earth Day chair, at 830-6603.

The final test before becoming true Hard Boiled Eggs is the "CRACKABLE"
 This 2 minute event will push a YOKE to their very limit. Not all yokes make it through each of the grueling events, but those that do find an Easter pride most eggs only talk about while on the shelf at FOOD LION.

"Its tuff to be Hard, but, tougher to be HARD Boiled"
LET'S GO EGGIES...MOVE IT, MOVE IT, ALMOST THERE!!



SEMPERTOONS: CREATED BY GUNNERY SGT. CHARLES WOLF, USMC/RET.

ON THE SET

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American Profile Hometown Content

03/08/2009

ACROSS

- Seizes firmly
- Brit's baby buggy
- Rent-____ (security guard)
- Taxpayer's fear
- Suffix for the well-off
- "Uh-uh!"
- Paris's nickname
- Time line segment
- Innie build up
- Winter hazard
- "A ____ bagatelle!"
- Gives back to a borrower
- Pay tribute to
- Ushers' rentals
- Flying high
- Word with fire or white
- Stick up
- Clown with the photog
- Ambulance letters
- Where the boyz are
- Runway strutter

- Risked getting bleeped

- Hastert's successor as Speaker
- Infant's rite
- Tackle box item
- Pale as a ghost
- ____ Valley, Calif.
- Harper Valley org.
- Get busy
- Margarita need
- Colorful horse
- "You ____ kidding!"
- Monopoly stack
- Meal for anechidna
- Increase in troop strength

DOWN

- Modern-day scandal suffix
- Essen's area
- Think tank nugget
- Snapshot, for short
- Heel style
- "Miracle on 34th Street" actor John
- Situation for rubber bullets
- Comics bark
- Gibson of films
- Protractor measurements
- Skater Sasha
- ____ out (declined)
- Ants, roaches, etc.
- Get pooped out
- Many a resort
- Misplay, as a flyball
- Like much notebook paper
- Co. bigwig
- ____ day (delivery)
- Home coming attendee

- Snorers saw them
- Chevy SUV
- Attack en masse
- Make over
- Compounds often end in "-ite"
- Island near Java
- Greek P's
- ____ Cup (yacht race)
- Lawn burrower
- Surgical blockage relievers
- KFC piece
- Powerful feline
- Low man in the choir
- Nile's ____ Dam
- Suffix meaning "lover"
- Colosseum combatants
- Baseball card fact
- Place to moor
- Chinatown gang
- Pay to play
- A Gershwin
- "Smoking or ___?"
- Play about Capote

[puzzle Solutions on A8]

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Gunnery Sgt. James E. Schneeweis

Job title: Operations Chief

Unit: Headquarters Battalion

Job duties: Supervise annual training and coordinate battalion activities.

What do you like most about your job: It keeps me busy.

Significant achievements: With the help of Debbie Watts, outstanding inspector general approval of Body Composition Program results; one of the best he'd seen.

Hobbies: Fishing, hunting, walking my dogs and spending time with family.

Military Service: 17 years in the Marine Corps

Time at Combat Center: Almost three years.



Hot Topics

LIFEGUARD TRAINING

The American Red Cross is offering a Lifeguard Training Course April 6 - 10 from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.. Anyone 15 years of age or older is eligible to attend. Enrollment is limited. Locations are Luckie Park pool in Twentynine Palms or Yucca Valley pool. Cost is \$150. For more information and registration call 366-5330, or stop by the Red Cross office on 6416 Hallee Rd., in Joshua Tree.

ASYMCA FREE SUMMER CAMP

ASYMCA is hosting a free summer camp for children of active duty service members who are 8-14 years of age. Registration is limited to the first 86 children. The deadline to sign up is June 11. To register, visit the ASYMCA for a registration form at Building 192 across from Carl's Jr. Current physical and shot records required. The registration form must be brought by the parent or legal guardian. Service member or dependent's military ID is required. For more information call 830-7481.

IMMIGRATION

The Legal Assistance Office, building 1514, assists all active duty (no fee) and their spouses (\$675) with becoming a U.S. citizen. Pick up a packet. Schedule an appointment when forms are complete. A military outreach by U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services is scheduled for 4 June. Immigration officers will assist active duty & family members with all types of immigration issues, including naturalization, permanent resident status, VISAs, petitions, applications, immigration forms, and answering questions. For more info and to schedule an appointment please call 830-6111.

EASTER EGG HUNT

An Easter Egg Hunt will be held at Felix Field April 11 from 12 to 3 p.m., featuring free food, games and entertainment. For more information call 830-6464.

This Day in Marine Corps History

April 6, 1941

Germany launches an invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece, which fall within the space of a few weeks.

SUDOKU #58

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Centerspeak

If you could have one restaurant built on base, what would you like to have built and why?

Opinions expressed in Centerspeak are not necessarily those of the OBSERVATION POST, the Marine Corps or Department of Defense.



SGT. GILBERT HIDALGO
 2ND BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT,
 HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE CO.

"I'd want a seafood restaurant, like Red Lobster, because we're in the middle of the desert."



PFC. MARIO ALANIS
 MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATION-ELECTRONICS
 SCHOOL, Co. A

"An Olive Garden, because that is a fun place for family and friends to get together."



STAFF SGT. JUAN DIAZDUMENG
 3RD COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION,
 SUPPORT CO.

"An Elephant Bar, because I had one where I last lived and it had great bartenders and servers out there."

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Suicide rates are highest in decade

PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Losing a Marine for any reason is devastating to those involved; losing 41 Marines to suicide is devastating to the Marine Corps.

In 2008, the number of Marines who committed suicide jumped from 33 in 2007 to 41. The increase of eight is more than ever before, boosting suicide to the number two killer in the Marine Corps, second only to accidents.

Marines contemplating suicide have many options they can go to for help, said Navy Lt. David Nelson, the Headquarters Battalion chaplain. One of the chaplains who is always available and always happy to help.

Your chaplain will never judge you, they only want to help, he said.

Tanya Stuckey, the lead prevention and education specialist with the Combat Center's counseling services

said that a Marine who is feeling depressed may not seek help, but does need it. She puts the responsibility for recognizing Marines in need on their leaders.

"Every Marine is a leader—every Marine is responsible," she said. "Marines have to look out for each other."

The signs of suicidal thoughts have been taught for a long time, she explained. The Marine Corps has become more aggressive in training leaders to spot the subtle signs of trouble.

Leaders need to realize is that they must be involved at all times, said the Morehead City, NC native. They need to know their Marines personally, if not they won't know when their Marines are showing signs of distress.

The signs of distress include withdrawing from your surroundings, drastic changes in energy levels,

changes in hygiene and expressions of hopelessness.

Having the ability to recognize these signs can save countless Marines lives, Stuckey said.

Once the need for help is recognized, never leave them alone, Nelson said. Ask them open-ended questions and make it known they aren't being judged.

If it is necessary, notify a staff noncommissioned officer of the Marine's need for help. They will be able to take the proper steps to get the Marine the help they need.

The counseling service on base is also a great source of help, Stuckey said. There is a counselor on duty from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.

To talk to the counselor on duty, call 830-6345.

If someone is considering suicide, contact the duty chaplain at 830-2190 or the suicide hotline at (800) 832-9119.

Volunteers receive awards from American Red Cross

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Volunteers from the Combat Center's American Red Cross office were recognized during an awards ceremony at the commanding general's house for all the hard work and dedication they gave to the Red Cross March 25.

The Red Cross took time during March to focus on volunteers who demonstrated compassion and generosity by supporting the Red Cross aboard the Combat Center and around the country, said Niki McBain, the Red Cross station manager.

The Combat Center relies on these everyday heroes to give their time and talents to help others by delivering emergency communication messages, training others to become dental assistants and home health-aids, working at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital or making financial donations, McBain said. "In the past year alone, the [Combat Center's] American Red Cross assisted 1,296 families and trained 40 people in career skills such as dental assisting and medical front-office."

As the award ceremony began, Brig. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus, the Combat Center's commanding general, spoke to the crowd of volunteers, and thanked them for all they have done for the military community.

"The Red Cross is extremely important to me and to this base," Gurganus said. "But it is even more important to the people you

See AWARDS, A7



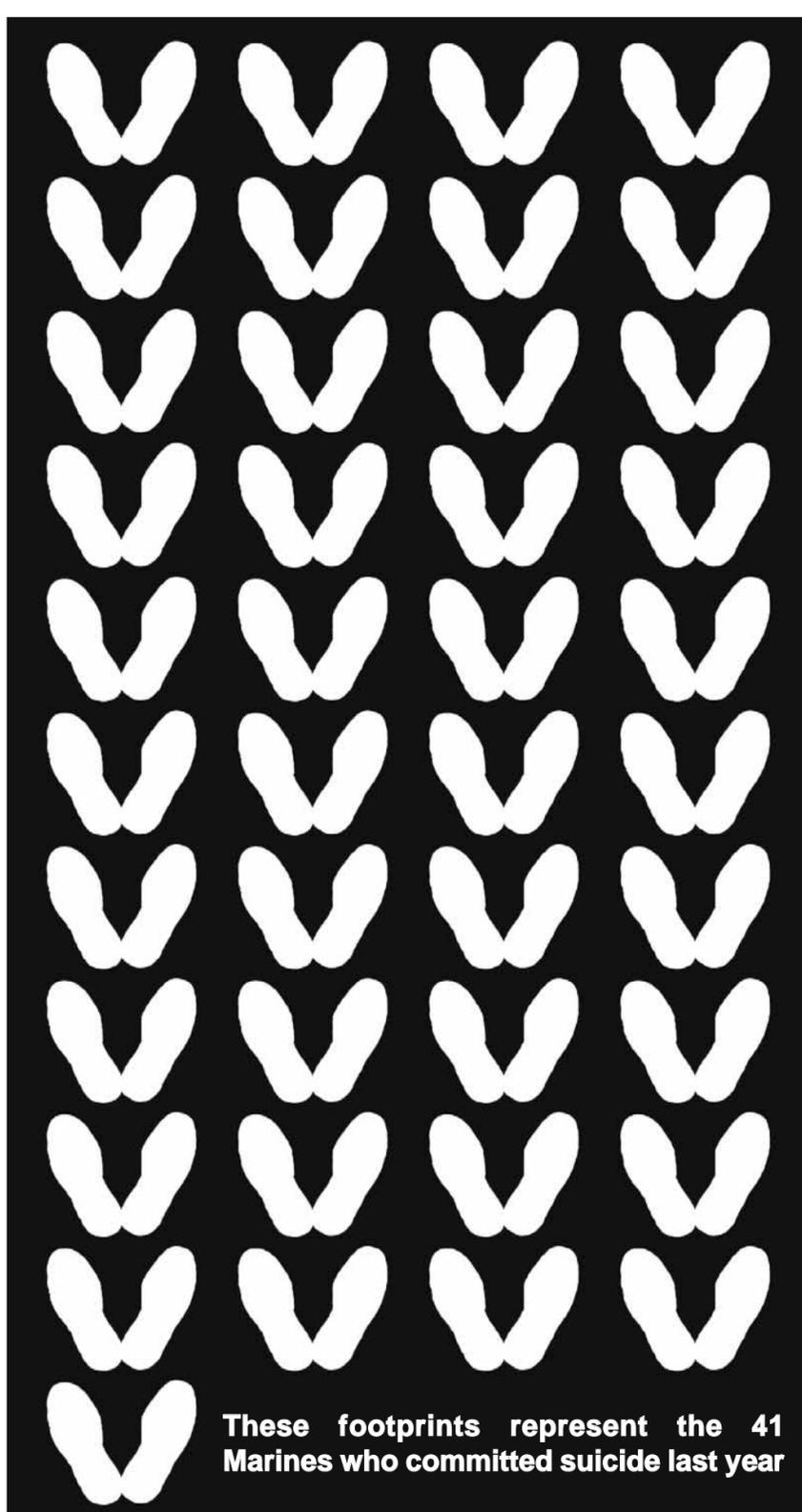
LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

[From left to right] Jade Gregg, the chair of volunteers, and Kaprece James, the American Red Cross station chair, stand with Krystle Rogala, casework chair, after she receives an award during an American Red Cross awards ceremony at the Combat Center's commanding general's house March 25.

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These footprints represent the 41 Marines who committed suicide last year

ILLUSTRATION BY: SGT. STEVE CUSHMAN

41 footprints represent the Marines who committed suicide in 2008. More Marines took their own life in 2008 than in other year in the 21st century.

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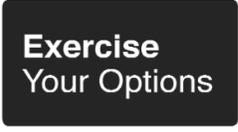
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ASYMCA officially opens new playground

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Armed Services YMCA officially opened their new playground in a grand opening ceremony at building 192 Tuesday.

The opening ceremony was hosted by Anita Neu-Fultz, the ASYMCA executive director, and attended by several base officials including Sgt. Maj. Susan M. Bellis, the Combat Center sergeant major, and Janet Gurganus, the wife of the Combat Center commanding general.

The playground is complete with artificial grass, park benches and a shade canopy for the comfort of parents watching their little ones at play.

The idea of this project, which was built from base funds, first came up in March 2008, Neu-Fultz said.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Allen Sullivan, the resident officer in charge of construction here, organized the contracting for the cement and turf companies.

Sullivan said although the playground construction project was relatively smaller than other base construction projects he has overseen, the time and effort put into it was anything but minimal.

"Our efforts for a construction project are usually proportional to the dollar value of the project," said Sullivan, a Rolla, Kan., native. "This project wasn't like that. It needed a lot

more attention than the size communicated."

The small details like laying down the artificial grass and assuring the safety of the playground were elements that may have taken extra work but were appreciated by many in the end.

"I think this is just excellent," said Brandy Hunter, wife of Staff Sgt. Robert Hunter with Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion.

Since Hunter is acting as a single mom with her husband deployed, local get-away locations like the playground can help ease the stress and grind of military life.

"This little oasis is just what some young wives and their little ones need," Hunter said. "For many of the kids, this will be where they learn their first socialization skills. I know when my kids were little ones, they were at the Y everyday."

Despite the fact some fam-

ilies aboard other military installations may take their green grass for granted, families here have been looking forward to the opening of the playground for months, Neu-Fultz said.

"We've had two girls on our little lawn outside for the past six months," said Neu-Fultz, pointing to the area where the first grass turf was laid. "They used to come down with their parents and just play in the grass. The families have been waiting for this."

One of the two girls Neu-Fultz was referring to was on the playground that day, exploring every nook and cranny the playground had to offer.

Neu-Fultz said parents who wish to have access to the playground must first register with the ASYMCA office since the grounds are not open to the base public. For more information on the playground or ASYMCA, call 830-7481.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

2-year-old Nicholas Looney and his 3-year-old sister Jasmine, race down a set of stairs while playing tag at the grand opening of the new Armed Services YMCA playground at building 192 Tuesday.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Easter Weekend Events Saturday, April 11, noon-3 p.m. Easter Egg Hunt, Felix Field: Egg hunts for different age groups, free BBQ, and more!

Easter Weekend Services Sunday, April 12 at 7 a.m. Easter Sunrise Service, Parade Deck. Join the MCAGCC and local civilian communities for a Christian celebration of Jesus Resurrection!

Roman Catholic Services Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel. Sunday, April 5, 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Palm Sunday Masses Thursday, April 9, 7 p.m., Opening of the Sacred Triduum: Mass of the Lord's Supper/Adoration until 10 p.m. Friday, April 10, noon: "The Passion of Christ" April 10, 3 p.m. Celebration of the Passion of Jesus Christ Saturday, April 11, 8 p.m. The Great Easter Vigil: Blessing of the Easter Fire, Proclamation of the Great Scriptures, Easter Mass, Baptisms and Confirmations. Sunday, April 12, 9:30 a.m. Easter Sunday Mass, Closing of the Sacred Triduum. N.B. No 3 p.m. Mass on Easter Sunday

Calvary Chapel/AGC Christ Chapel. Friday, April 10, 5 p.m. Good Friday service. Sunday, April 12, 9 a.m. Resurrection Sunday: Praise & Worship, Bible-centered teaching, Baptisms

Jewish Services. April 8 and 9, Celebration of Passover Place: Chabad Congregation, Palm Springs, California POC: Rabbi Denebeim. 325-0774

Sunday

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel Roman Catholic Services

8 a.m. Faith Formation /CCD Sept. - May building 1551

8:45 a.m. Confessions+ 9 a.m. Rosary 9:30 a.m. Catholic Mass*

9:30 a.m. Children's Liturgy of the Word 4:15 p.m. Confessions+

4 p.m. Choir Practice 4:30 p.m. Rosary 5 p.m. Catholic Mass

Christ Chapel Lay-Led Independent Baptist Breakfast, 8 a.m. West Wing

Non-Denominational Christian Service

9 a.m. Worship* 9 a.m. Children's Church 10:15 a.m. Sunday School*

6 p.m. Youth Group **Lay-led Gospel Service**

11:30 a.m. Worship Protestant Chapel **Assemblies of God Fellowship**

9:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Morning Service building 1707, room G

Legend * Indicates Child Care Provided + For Appointments for Confessions call 830-6456/6482

Weekday Events

Immaculate Heart of Mary Mon-Fri 11:45 a.m. Catholic Mass (except holidays)

Monday

Immaculate Heart of Mary Mon-Fri 11:45 a.m. Catholic Mass (except holidays)

Tuesday

Christ Chapel 9 a.m. Christian Women's Fellowship* Sept. to May Evening service at 7 p.m. - Protestant Chapel west wing

Immaculate Heart of Mary 4-5:30 p.m. Children's RCIA 5-8 p.m. Catechist Meeting (Second Tuesday each month) 6-7:30 p.m. Baptism Class (First Tuesday each month)

Wednesday

Christ Chapel 6 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal 6:30 p.m. Food/Fellowship 7 p.m. Non-Denomination Bible Study 7 p.m. Lay-led Gospel Bible Study

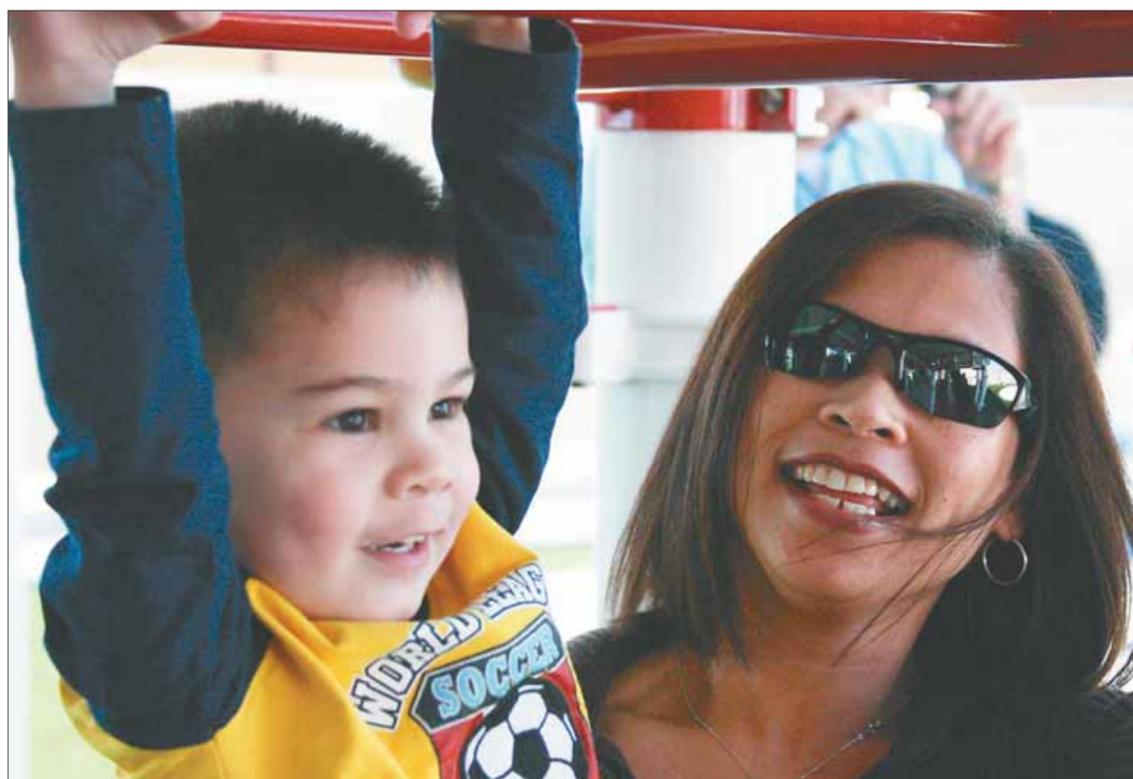
Immaculate Heart of Mary 9:30 a.m. Military Council of Catholic Women* Sept. to May 6 p.m. Youth Teen 7 p.m. Knights of Columbus (1st Wednesday each month)

Thursday

Immaculate Heart of Mary 6-7:30 p.m. RCIA Resumes Sept 11 C&E Barracks building 1666 11:30 a.m. Bible Study Chaplain Moran 830-6187

Friday

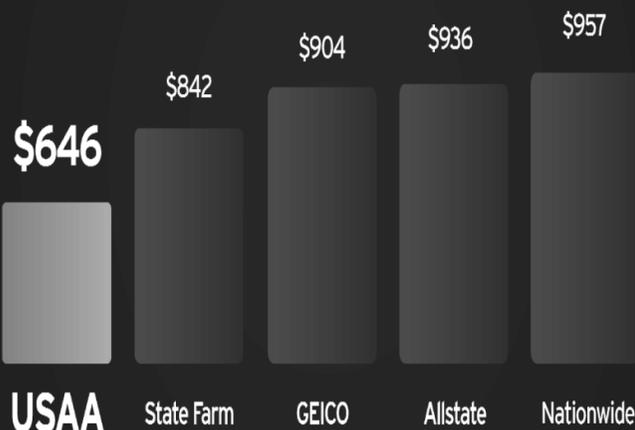
Christ Chapel 5 p.m. Gospel Rehearsal **Immaculate Heart of Mary** 12:15 p.m. 4:30 p.m. Exposition/Adoration Most Blessed Sacrament (First Friday each month)



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

2-year-old Nicholas Looney and his mother, Mari Lou, try out the monkey bars at the grand opening of the new Armed Services YMCA playground at building 192 Tuesday.

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Combat Center marksmen hit mark at competition

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center Marksmanship Training Unit Rifle Team won the Western Division Team match at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton March 20.

It has been eight years since the Combat Center last won a competitive marksmanship award, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Fredrick T. Kenney, the officer in charge of MTU.

"The team won the San Diego trophy for the best rifle team west of the Mississippi," said Kenney, a Springhill, Kan., native about the three-week match.

The trophy they brought home has a bronze bear on top of a redwood block studded with medal tags displaying each year and name of the winning team since 1921. Every year, the team who is named best with the M-16A2 service rifle is granted the honor of displaying the trophy until the competition continues the following spring.

"This competition was a big deal because the competition is normally dominated by MCRD [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] San Diego, and teams that have distinguished shooters," Keeney said.

The match brought more than 200 Marines from West



Lance Cpl. Jordan R. Lacy, a marksman instructor with the Marksmanship Training Unit here, won the second gold medal at the Western Division Team match at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton March 20.

Coast installations together in teams of four to challenge each other's best rifle and pistol skills.

The four Marines who shot for the MTU team, Sgt. Jason R. Reyna, Sgt. Robert S. Lynn, Cpl. Jesus A. Ramirez, and Lance Cpl. Jordan R. Lacy, were selected after enrolling in the three-week intramural shooting match at the known-distance range

here in October. Keeney said he believes the early emphasis on fundamentals during the intramural tryout event is what ultimately changed the team's attitude about the annual competition and lead them to victory.

"Last year, and the years before that, we had kind of a last-minute team," Keeney said. "This year, we had the goal to win this match from the beginning."

Staff Sgt. Gabriel Green, the team's captain, agreed about changes in attitude

yielding changes in results. "This year we went out to learn," Green said. "We leaned on each other and shot for MTU."

For Marines like Lynn, who experienced their first major marksmanship competition that year, the experience promoted motivation to return in the years to come.

Lynn, the winner of the second gold medal for individual shooting, was also awarded the "High Tyro" award given to those who score the highest and have no

previous competitions to his or her name.

Lynn, a marksmanship instructor at the rifle range here, said he believes the amount of knowledge he gained at the competition about marksmanship, ballistics and detailed fundamentals was in itself a reward.

"Throughout the three weeks I was there, I learned so much from the older guys who had already done these competitions," said the Glenmont, N.Y., native. "Their instruction can give a

broader depth of understanding, regardless of who the Marine is. Then that Marine can pass on at least a portion of that knowledge to their own Marines."

Lacy, a fellow instructor with MTU, also won an individual award for his score; the silver medal for the rifle.

Lacy said his appreciation for marksmanship stems from the unbiased potential it offers people of all genders, races, religions and languages.

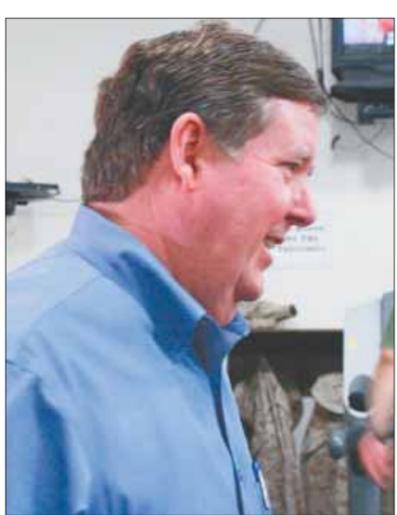
"Anyone can do this," Lacy said of competitive shooting. "It has nothing to do with you being a strong jock or being intelligent. It only reflects your discipline and attention to detail. Aside from that, marksmanship ties into everything we do as Marines."

Lacy had participated in competitive shooting on the east coast prior to this competition, but had never done as well. He attributed his success to a change in mentality and more humble approach to learning as much as possible.

"Some people like dancing, I like shooting," said Lacy, a Richmond, Va., native. "There's nothing like watching a shooter in his zone and knowing that nothing can distract his rhythm. There's something almost poetic about it."

Lynn said he highly encourages Marine of all ranks and units to shoot at the intramural trials every October to gain a deeper understanding of one of the Marine Corps' oldest skills.

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LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON
Ken Calvert, a member of the United States House of Representatives, talks with a tour member in Camp Wilson's Fitness Center during a tour of the Combat Center's training areas March 28.

TOUR, from A1
Ranges 200 and 215, where he was able to walk through the mock training villages and watch as Marines and sailors trained through various areas of the facility.
During the tour of the ranges, Ricker explained the importance of the ranges and how the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group continuously changes the training to mirror what service members are running into while deployed.
"There is a lot more intensive training going on which is good for these Marines since this is certainly a much more dangerous world," Calvert said. "The villages we saw were quite impressive. I realize now what Marines have to do to prepare themselves for war."
Calvert had the opportunity to walk through various buildings throughout the mock towns. During the walk-through, Calvert was informed on how each unit is observed and graded during their training exercises.
Calvert also toured Camp Wilson, where he was accompanied by Col. Michael Callaghan, the officer-in-charge of Mojave Viper's Support Detachment, and Sgt. Maj. Jerome Alford, the Mojave Viper's Support Detachment sergeant major.
During his tour of Camp Wilson, Calvert was shown the dining facilities, the Fitness Center, the exchange and the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program area.
"From talking to the Marines I am very pleased with the training," Calvert said. "It is very realistic, which helps keep the casualties to the minimum."
At the end of the tour, Calvert left the Combat Center in assurance that the Marine Corps is doing everything it can to properly train Marines and sailors before a deployment, he said.

TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM
by Lou Gerhardt

As we read of the shenanigans, the ear marks, the pork barrel projects, and the machinations of lobbyists and politicians, many of us become cynical. Some of us are tempted to declare "Every man has his price." This pessimistic and negative attitude bothers me and so I offer you a more positive perspective.

In the early years of the 18th century, Sir Robert Walpole, first earl of Oxford, was reputed to have told a colleague that he knew the price of every man in the House of Commons.

A shortened version of his alleged comment has come down to us as the familiar statement: "Every man has his price."

The truth of the matter, however, is that Walpole did not say that at all.

What he actually said was "I know the price of every man in this House except three." That is the truth of the matter. That is the glory of it all.

Do not lose heart, my friends. There has always been and there will always be the "saving remnant."

It has been my happy experience through the years to recognize in every profession, every trade, every aspect of business and in every institution, strong men and women of such impeccable character, such decency of mind, such unflinching courage, and, dare I write it, such simple goodness that in time even the most grievous situations have been alleviated.

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Lean 6 Sigma pushes new leaders

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Business Performance Office graduated 25 students from its second green-belt level Lean Six Sigma course March 20.

The Lean Six Sigma course is designed to teach students how to use continuous process improvement, or CPI, in their work areas by reducing wasteful habits and preserving limited resources, said Tina Miller, the BPO deputy director.

"This course compliments what leaders here are always trying to do; serve the Marines," Miller said.

The 40-hour course walks its students through the process of defining, measuring, analyzing, improving and controlling any snags in procedure efficiency, regardless of the business's nature and mission.

After students graduate the green-belt course, they are instructed to complete a CPI project on base. After the project has been completed, the students become certified green belts.

Steven Johnson, the deputy director of Exercise Support Division, was one of the students who recently graduated from the course.

"No matter what kind of work you do, there is always room for improved processes," Johnson said. "If you don't look outside the box, you're

not likely to make any dramatic improvements. LSS opens your eyes and allows a better understanding of what you can accomplish."

Dr. Alex Pacheco, the BPO director, said LSS shows students how CPI goes further than simply making spreadsheets and maintaining a budget.

"This base is like a small city," said Pacheco. "Running this small city is a multi-million dollar business whether people realize it or not."

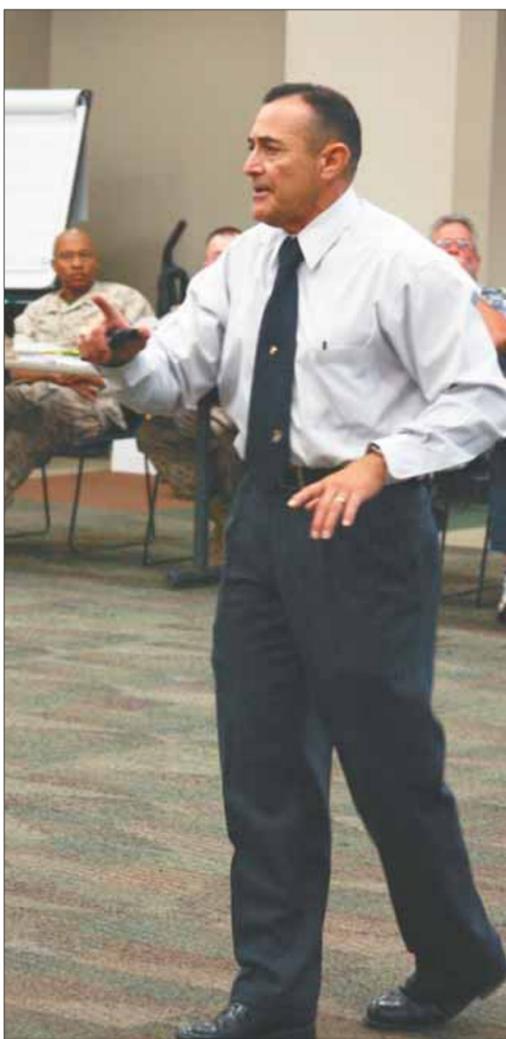
Miller agreed, saying that using CPI has a powerful, indirect impact on the modern warfighter. These impacts are made by actions such as reducing the number of people needed for a project, and increasing the effectiveness instead.

"Leaders use this program to become a more efficient organization instead of asking for more bodies to validate their requirements," Miller said. "Then we are not wasting resources to arrive at our goal. We simply redeploy assets to buy-down unfunded requirements."

Miller continued, saying she believes with the Global War on Terror budget being mere steps from drying up, perseverance of current resources will allow military forces to operate as though no budget cuts took place.

"Historically, the first thing

See LEAN 6, A8



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Dr. Alex Pacheco, the director of the Business Performance Office here, gives a final brief to the most recent class of green belt Lean Six Sigma course graduates at building 1707 March 20.

AWARDS, from A3

have reached out to and those who you have helped when they needed it.

"I truly thank each and every one of the volunteers and all they have done."

As the awards were being passed out, volunteers were recognized for the amount of hours they gave in support of the Red Cross. Volunteer hours ranged from 50 to more than 1000 hours.

The volunteers received

framed awards, Red Cross backpacks, a glass Red Cross figurine or a decorated plaque.

A handful of attendees were also recognized for being good neighbors. Although they did not volunteer with the American Red Cross, they contributed to the success of the Red Cross mission through their donations and support.

For more information regarding the Combat Center's American Red Cross, call 830-6685.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Kaprece James, the American Red Cross station chair for the base, hands a glass figurine to Janet Gurganus and her husband, Brig. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus, the Combat Center's commanding general during the American Red Cross awards ceremony March 25 at the commanding general's house.

Combat Center Trader Ads

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The deadline for submitting Trader ads is noon Wednesday, for the upcoming Friday's paper.

Trader Ad Forms are available at the Public Affairs Office and may be filled out during normal working hours at Bldg. 1417.

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1986 FORD F-250 TRUCK Extra-cab, diesel 6.9, 4 speed with overdrive. Set up for gooseneck or 5th wheel. \$3,500 OBO. Call 447-0499. 2/27/09

2006 SILVERADO 1500HD CREW CAB, 36,000 miles, \$18,000, great condition, extras, call Bryan at 898-5549. 2/20/09

1994 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER, Needs transmission, everything else is good. Very reasonable. Free towing. Call 365-3039. 2/20/09

Ads may also be submitted through e-mail, but will only be accepted from those with an @usmc.mil address. If you are active duty, retired military or a family member and do not have an @usmc.mil address you can go to the PAO page of the base

2000 PORSCHE BOXTER 3, Excellent cond., call for details. \$23,000. See lemon lot. Cell 401-7315. 2/6/09

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Web site at: <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/dirs/pao/> and complete a request to publish an ad.

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FURNITURE. Large oak entertainment unit. \$100. Oak bookcase \$50. 367-6030. 4/3/09

WIRE HAIRD DACHSHUND, spayed female, 9 mo., all shots, very sweet, doesn't shed, housebroken. \$150. Call 362-4131. 4/3/09

PUPPY. Apricot toy poodle \$200, 1st shot, healthy, purebred, female. Call 364-1133. 3/27/09

noncommercial classified ads containing items of personal property offered by and for individuals authorized to use this service. Such ads must represent incidental exchanged not of sustained business nature.

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MOVIES FOR SALE. \$5 per movie or 5 movies for \$20. Call Tim at 367-7183. 3/20/09

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LEAN 6, from A7

the government does when it starts running out of resources is making budget cuts," Miller said. "We want to make sure those budgets don't happen at the expense of our warfighter."

Pacheco said as students enrolled in the course, are assigned to teams, presented with problems and forced to brainstorm creative solutions, they are stretching the longevity of the American tax payer's dollars and military resources.

The success of the student in the classroom may transition into bigger success for organizations in the Marine Corps, Pacheco said.

"The CPI program here in Twentynine Palms is the best in the Marine Corps," Pacheco said about a recent Headquarters Marine Corps study. "It feels good to be

setting a goal for the Marine Corps, and we don't want to be surpassed."

Pacheco added he and Miller believe the success of the program is not due to budget, classroom time or additional training. Rather, it's the hard work of each leader who enters the course as a student and emerges with the inspiration to make a difference.

"We want to say that this program has been so successful because of the insightful leadership on this base," Pacheco said. "The early success they get from this program will help them meet the mission at lower costs and cycle time."

LSS may initiate a yellow belt course this year to give more base officials and leaders a stepping stone to the green belt courses. For more information, call the BPO at 830-1186.

NAVY CROSS, from A1

the Marines had evacuated the burning vehicle did he allow himself to be removed from the turret for medical treatment.

"I knew I was hit," he said. "I guess the adrenaline kept me going."

Gustafson humbly stressed that he was only doing his job, nothing more.

"Anyone I served with would have done the same," said the Eagan, IL native. "Heck, if it wasn't for everyone else out there, I wouldn't have made it."

After being treated by corpsmen at the scene, he was transported to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany and then to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Upon regaining consciousness after surgery, Gustafson called his parents



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Cpl. Brady Gustafson [left] and Richard Blasongame [right], both Navy Cross recipients, shake hands and exchange words after the ceremony honoring Gustafson at Lance Cpl. Torrey Grey Field March 27.

to tell them what happened, said the 21 year-old.

"We were worried about him," said his mother, Kim Gustafson. "But we knew

everything would work out, God does have a plan after all."

During 2/7's deployment to Afghanistan, "the extraor-

dinary became ordinary," said Lt. Col Richard Hall, 2/7's commanding officer during the deployment. "I underestimated my Marines and I'm in awe of what they accomplished."

Known as the hardest hit battalion in the Marine Corps during 2008, 2/7 lost over 20 Marines and sailors and sent over 80 home with serious injuries during their eight month deployment to Afghanistan.

Gustafson is now looking to the future and says he is looking forward to a bright future outside of the Marine Corps.

"I took a lot of photos in Afghanistan," said Gustafson. "I'm going to go to college in the fall and try and make a career out of it."

Cpl. Brady Gustafson never faltered during the ambush and his heroism helped save the lives of all the Marines involved.

The valor and courage displayed on the streets of Shewan that July day embodied the core values of the Marine Corps and sets an example for all to emulate and be proud of.

"I'm proud of all the Marines," said Kim. "There are so many heroes, I'm so lucky to count my son among one of them."

3RD LAR, from A1

weapon.

"This training we are doing is what is going to help us out later," he said about future deployments. "It is a big part of what 3rd LAR does, we move in vehicles, but are capable of getting out on foot as well."

Marines who participated in the training agreed it was incredibly valuable for them to do.

"I think I did pretty good. All my shots were good ones and I made it through the buddy rush course pretty fast," said Lance Cpl. Sterling Baker, an LAV crewman with Company E and a native of Albuquerque, N.M. "This stuff is good to go, and it doesn't hurt to run around in the field either, it can even be fun sometimes."

With the rest of the battalion recently deployed, the company will work on sharpening their skills for their first deployment.

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SPORTS AND LEISURE

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B1

Why that's Lt. Dan

PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band made a fifth appearance to the Combat Center and rocked a packed crowd at the Sunset Cinema Saturday.

This free appearance gave base personnel and their families a chance to see a great show on base and an opportunity to meet 'Lt. Dan' and get the entire band's autographs from the band members.

Sinise is best known for his roles in such films as Forrest Gump, The Green Mile and Apollo 13, and the hit television show CSI: New York. Despite his busy schedule, Sinise continues to give his time to support the troops stationed in the U.S. and overseas.

The 12-member band played several genres of music that gave those in attendance an opportunity to rock out to music they enjoy. The songs they played ranged from artists like Lynyrd Skynyrd to Evanescence.

The show started with Mari Anne Jayme singing a heartwarming rendition of The Star Spangled Banner.

The band then raised the tempo, singing classic American songs that got just about everyone on their feet and singing along.

During a cover of LeBelle's "Lady Marmalade," they called the ladies in attendance to join the band on stage to sing along and dance.

After a few more American classics, Julie

See LT. DAN, B4



Gary Sinise, the co-star of the six-time Oscar winning movie Forrest Gump, and bass guitar player for the Lt. Dan Band, reaches out to one of his newest fans during their show Saturday night at the Sunset Cinema.

Aaron's Exploits; journey begins deep underground

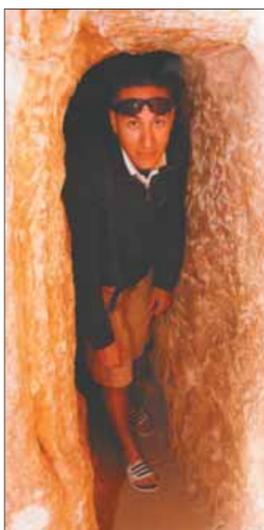
Editor's note: This is the first installment of a weekly feature in the Observation Post where we follow Lance Cpl. Aaron Kristopik, a single Marine aboard the Combat Center, as he explores Southern California in search of cheap or free attractions for service members as a chance to get out of the barracks after he said he "realized the Combat Center seems to be a geographical oddity, where if someone drives two hours in any direction they will hit an awesome tourist attraction." This week he headed northeast, to the isolated

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Lance Cpl. Aaron Kristopik, a paralegal clerk with the Combat Center's Staff Judge Advocate and a native of New Britain, Conn., began his weekly expeditions to experience Southern California by an attraction tucked away in the rocky hills of the Mojave National Reserve, known as Mitchell's Cavern, on Saturday.

After the two-hour scenic drive to the cavern, the day started with an explosion of



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Aaron Kristopik, a paralegal with the Combat Center's Staff Judge Advocate office, squeezes through a hole in Mitchell's Cavern. Kristopik, an avid traveler began his sightseeing journey around Southern California with a trip to the cavern.

knowledge when Mike Ray, a cavern tour guide on Kristopik's adventure, filled his head with information about geology, and the history of the cavern.

"I had no idea a place like this could have been a tourist attraction since before the Great Depression," Kristopik said. "And it's cool that the state of California bought it from two homesteaders to keep it open as a tourist attraction."

Ray told the story of the origin, and a short history of the cavern.

"The two of them, Jack Mitchell and his wife Ida, owned it as a homestead, and in the late 1920's made it into a bed and breakfast and gave tours of the cavern," Ray said. "The state bought it in 1956 and ever since then it has been a hard-to-find, but interesting tourist attraction."

Kristopik said he learned a great deal from Ray, not just about the history of the cave, but how it was made too.

"I learned the difference between stalagmites, and stalactites, and how they're all formed," he said. "Before today, I would have thought those were bars on the Jersey Shore or something," he said referring to the stalactite formations that seemed to drip down from the ceiling.

Kristopik said the cavern has altered the way he sees the world.

"I've been living my life wrong this whole time," he said. "Being almost completely at one with nature,

and experiencing the caves like this has really brought me out of my element."

The entire time Kristopik was on the tour, he said he was really impressed and fully engrossed by the rock formations. Once he almost walked face-first into a long spike of solid rock hanging from the ceiling of the cave.

"I just about walked into the stalactite, and I'm the last one in line," he said after nearly hitting his head.

Kristopik said the different setting was unlike anything he ever experienced or expected.

"I wore sandals today not even considering that I would be walking around rattlesnakes and other dangerous things in the wilderness," he said. "Scorpions, and rattlesnakes; I'm terrified of them. All day I was the only one on the tour in sandals."

"I'm kind of a city guy at heart, and it's really cool to start sightseeing in the middle of nowhere like this," he said.

Kristopik said the tour was "one of the best tours - period."

"The tour guide was great, he kept me interested the entire time and really knew his stuff about the cave system," Kristopik said. "I've never really been in a cave before. Deep-down I took some cool stuff from there, it was one of those live, learn, love, kind of situations."

Kristopik said his recent cave outing was a good way to begin his exploration of Southern California.

"This place is good, it's a nice hidden away spot," he said. "It's one of those places you would have to look for to find. Not easy to get to because of the back roads and small towns, but it is definitely a good place to see."

Kristopik said the cavern is an even more unique spot to visit because of its seclusion.

"I was talking to one of the park rangers and he said it took him almost three hours to go



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Aaron Kristopik, a paralegal with the Combat Center's Staff Judge Advocate, looks up at a large formation of stalactites. Stalactites are formed over thousands of years from ceilings of caves.

get supplies," he said. "He didn't even call it groceries - he called it supplies. That just shows you he probably has to go to Costco and buy stuff in bulk and survive out here on his own. That actually seems like a pretty sweet deal."

Kristopik said the seclusion is what makes the area around the cave such a beautiful place.

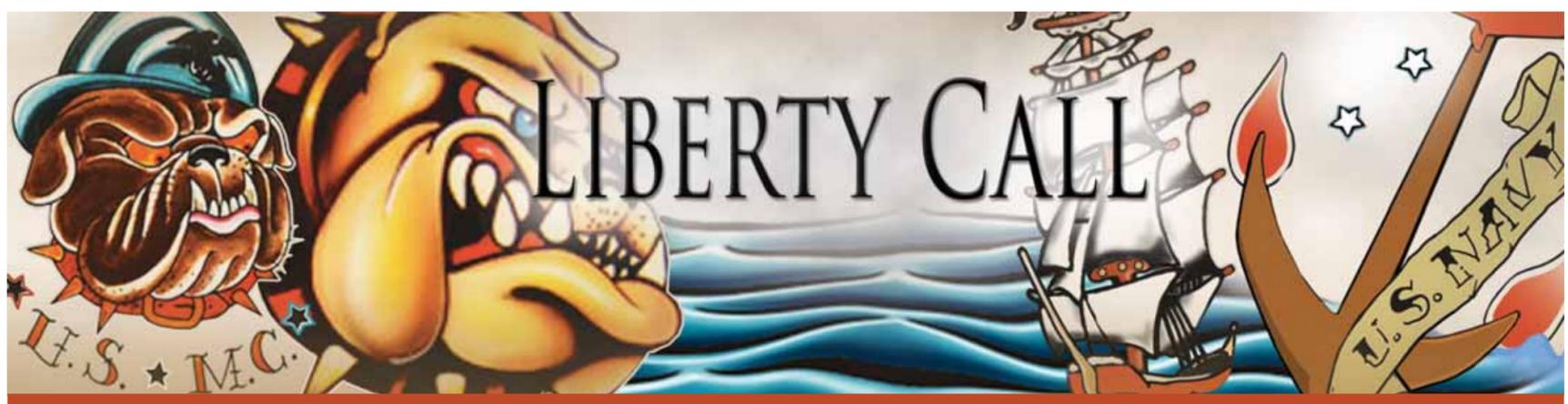
"It's far removed from any towns or cities, which is why the countryside out here is so incredible," he said. "It's breathtaking to see places like this. In the city where I'm from it's nothing but congestion. This is good. This is healthy."

Mitchell's Cavern is a great place to visit even for someone who is not that "into" geology, he said.

"I would definitely recommend this for others to check out," he said. "It was a long drive and we killed a lot of bugs on the windshield, but it was worth it. And I think they would appreciate being hit on the way to such a cool place."

The way to the cavern is long, but simple. It is located

See EXPLOITS, B4



TUES. 4/7 Chris Walters acoustic old school blues with special guests Time: 7 p.m. Where: 29 Palms Inn 73950 Inn Avenue Twentynine Palms 367-3505	MON. 4/13 Jam Night Time: 7 p.m. Where: Mama Hillybeans 426 E Tehachapi Blvd. Tehachapi (661)822-BEAN	SAT. 4/18 Little Petroglyph Canyon Tours Time: All day event Where: Maturango Museum 100 East Las Flores Ave. Ridgecrest. Museum hours are from 10 a.m., to 5 p.m. every day except major holidays. e-mail: matmus3@maturango.org	THURS. 4/23 Songwriting Poetry & Rhythm Club Time: 7 p.m. Where: Water Canyon Coffee Co. 55844 29 Palms Highway Yucca Valley. West end of Yucca Valley, corner of 29 Palms Hwy. and Pioneertown Road. 760-365-7771	SAT. 4/11 Don Felder, An Evening at the Hotel California Time: 8 p.m. Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort 46-200 Harrison Pl. Coachella For more info call 866-377-6829 or visit http://www.spotlight29.com
FRI. 4/17 India Arie & Musiq Soulchild Time: 8 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84-245 Indio Springs Pkwy. Indio For more info call (800) 827-2946 or visit http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com	SAT. 4/18 Ramon Ayala in concert Time: 8 p.m. Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa 49500 Seminole Dr., Cabazon For more info call (800) 252-4499 or visit http://www.morongocasinoresort.com	SAT. 4/25 UB40 Time: 8 p.m. Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa 49500 Seminole Dr., Cabazon For more info call (800) 252-4499 or visit http://www.morongocasinoresort.com	FRI. 5/15 The comedy of Lisa Lampanelli Time: 9 p.m. Where: Agua Caliente 32-250 Bob Hope Dr. Rancho Mirage For more info call (888) 999-1995	SAT. 5/23 Allman Brothers Band & Doobie Brothers Time: 8 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84-245 Indio Springs Pkwy. Indio For more info call (800) 827-2946 or visit http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com

'The Twentynine Palms story' From miners to Marines

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Throughout the Marine Corps, Twentynine Palms is known for its desert landscape, intolerable heat and the infamous pre-deployment training package dubbed "Mojave Viper."

However, the City of Twentynine Palms is known for its rich history that dates back nearly a century before the Marine Corps came to town in 1952.

According to archaeological evidence, several Native American tribes inhabiting the area for thousands of years, but the first recorded expeditions into the Mojave Desert did not occur until the mid-1800s.

In 1844, Army Capt. John C. Fremont, a topographical engineer, ventured through the Mojave Desert during his first expedition in Southern California and reported to the War Department in Washington, D.C., that "The

contents of this great basin are yet to be examined," according to "The Twentynine Palms Story," written by author Hazel M. Spell.

Although Fremont passed through the Morongo Basin, the first recorded expedition in the Twentynine Palms area did not occur until 1855 when Col. Henry Washington, the deputy surveyor under contract with the United States Surveyor General of California, made contact with members of the Chemehuevi tribe near what is now called the Oasis of Mara.

The 1849 California Gold Rush brought prospectors into the Death Valley area in search of riches. By the 1870s, overcrowding in Death Valley caused prospectors to head south.

According to "The Twentynine Palms Story," the first known prospector to begin mining in the area was Bill McHaney. The oasis was also a popular stop for other prospectors who stopped to rest and replenish their water

before heading further into the desert.

The mining industry soon expanded in the Morongo Basin and boomed until 1917 when the United States entered World War I. However, the "War to End All Wars" would soon pave the way for the population boom in the area, said Pat Heumann, a Twentynine Palms Historical Society historian.

Although the Homestead Act came to pass in 1862, which gave 160 acres of land to any American citizen or intended citizen who has never taken up arms against the United States, many homesteaders heading west had no desire to settle in the desert due to its harsh climate and lack of farming opportunities.

After World War I, many veterans suffered from pulmonary ailments caused by the use of chemical weapons. Dr. James B. Luckie spent years treating these veterans after the war ended and determined the need for a dry climate would help them recover. Luckie, who is regarded as "the father of Twentynine Palms," also

donated 40 acres of his land to the American Legion, which has since become known as Luckie Park.

"The town has had military history here, even before Condor Field and the Marine Corps base," Heumann said. "Most of the original homesteaders in the 1920s were World War I veterans seeking a drier climate, so they settled here and helped build the town."

With the Homestead Act still in effect, many veterans began filing claims to receive

land in the Mojave Desert. Frank Bagley, who served with the American Expeditionary Force in Europe as an aviator, settled in Twentynine Palms in 1927 with his family.

Bagley's Market, which is now the location of the Plaza shopping center off of Two Mile Road, was the first grocery store in Twentynine Palms and, along with the construction of the first schoolhouse that same year, helped give the town a feeling of permanence in the Morongo Basin.

According to the book "Images of America: Twentynine Palms," Bagley later became a well-known figure in Twentynine Palms by building the town's post office next to his store and serving as postmaster from 1930 to 1937.

Bagley also helped build a number of businesses still in existence today, including Smith's Ranch and the water shed. He was also actively involved in the American Legion, the Lions Club and the Little Church of the Desert.

His wife, Helen Bagley, was also an active member of the budding community. She served as the San Bernardino County branch librarian from 1930 and 1940, and was also an active member of the school board from 1928 to 1938.

Together, the Bagleys tirelessly helped newly-arriving homesteaders obtain land, open businesses and feel welcome in Twentynine Palms. In 1978, Helen Bagley published a book titled "Sand in



A gold mill near Twentynine Palms in 1941. After World War I ended, the mining industry in the region spiked again and boomed until the outbreak of World War II.

My Shoe," which chronicles the early days of the homesteaders in the town.

The added attraction of the Joshua Tree National Monument, now called Joshua Tree National Park, was created in 1936 and began attracting thousands of visitors each year. The mines also boomed again during the Great Depression, when poverty-stricken Americans headed west in search of employment opportunities. However, mining was ceased again at the outbreak of World War II.

When the war began, Twentynine Palms seemed doomed to "ghost town" status, since many of the young men living there were called to war. The situation changed when the Army Air Forces began training glider pilots at Condor Field, which is now the Combat Center, to fight in World War II.

After the war, the base was deactivated, but the town continued to grow. More homes and businesses were erected, and residents steadily trickled in to occupy the area. It wasn't until 1952 that the Marine Corps established what is now the Combat Center, which has since grown to accommodate a variety of training.

Since its discovery, Twentynine Palms has grown from an oasis of palm trees to an "Oasis of Murals." Today, much of the town's colorful history can be viewed in the form of 18 murals painted on the sides of buildings throughout the area.



Citizens of Twentynine Palms stand in front of the original Twentynine Palms town hall in 1932.

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4:00	4:25	4:30	*4:40	*4:45	*5:00	*5:10	*5:45		
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Combat Center sports standings



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lorenzo Alford (in blue) with the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital basketball team attempts to steal the ball from a Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School All-Star team member during a game at the Combat Center's East Gym Wednesday.

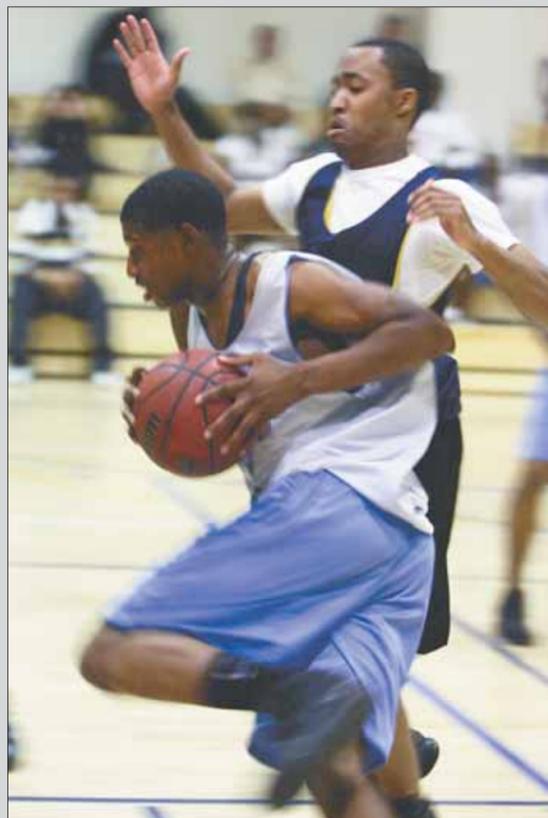
2009 Intramural Basketball Standings as of Thursday

Team	Wins	Losses
MCCES All-Stars	11	0
NHTP	10	1
Ole School Plus	9	2
MCCES A	7	4
MCCES Party	6	5
1st Tanks	6	5
IPAC	5	6
MWSS-374 (B)	4	7
3rd CEB	4	7
CLB-7	2	9
MWSS-374 (A)	2	9



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

The Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School All-Star team member Antonio Ewings passes to teammate Jay Simmons during an intense round against Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School All-Star team member Jay Simmons slips past Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital basketball team member Will Roots during a game at the Combat Center East Gym Wednesday.



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Chris Apodaca, a player on the MCCES team, soars through the air as he serves the ball to his opponents, Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms, during a Wednesday night game at the West Gym.



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Chris Lynch, a player for HQBN 1, slides the ball past the defender, Jason Wareham, during their Wednesday night game against HQBN 2.

Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League

Team	Wins	Losses
HQBN #1	2	0
Hospital	2	1
MCCES	1	2
HQBN #2	1	2
HOSPITAL #2	0	1

Wednesday's scores

HQBN #1	defeats	MCCES
MCCES	defeats	HOSPITAL #1
HOSPITAL #1	defeats	HOSPITAL #2



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Jason Wareham, a player with HQBN 2, returns a volley during their game against HQBN 1 in their Wednesday night game at the West Gym. HQBN 2 lost both matches of the game.

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PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS
Gary Sinise wails on his guitar during a show Saturday night at the Sunset Cinema.

LT. DAN, from B1

Dutchek and Gina Gonzalez called one lucky Marine on stage and serenaded him with Beyonce Knowles' "Crazy in Love" while competing for the Marine's attention.

The band plans to come back next year and hopefully for years to come, said Kelly Coe, the special event coordinator with MCCS. "The families and troops love him."

Gary Sinise agreed, saying he hopes his schedule allows him to come back next year. "I know there's not much out here," said Sinise. "The people seem to enjoy when I come. I hope they see that they're appreciated."

He ended the night personally thanking all the Marines he could for their service, shaking hands with fans and signing autographs.

Keep an eye open next March, another great show may be on the way.

EXPLOITS, from B1

outside the small town of Essex, Calif., with a population of only 100 people.

Soon-to-be patrons leaving from the Combat Center

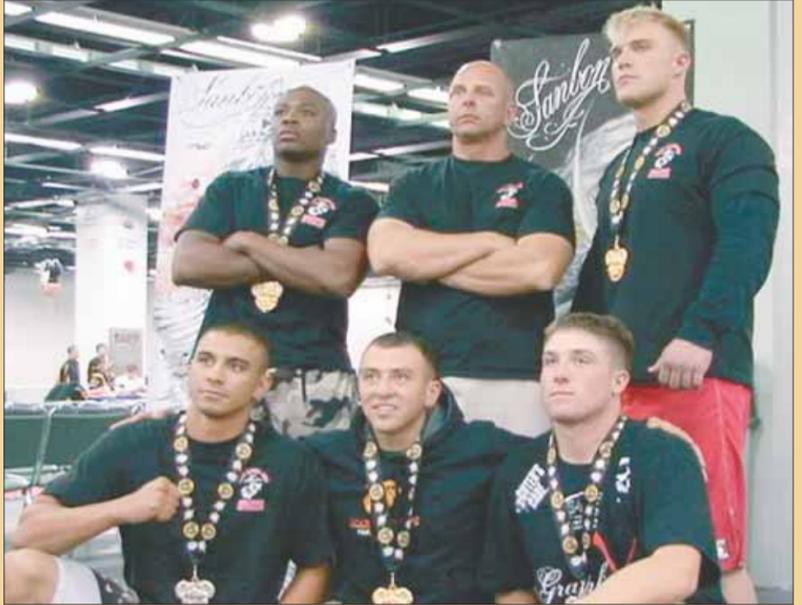
need only to follow Amboy Road, turn right on old Route 66, heading toward Needles, Calif., and take Essex Road north to the cavern at the Mitchell's Cavern sign.

Admission is \$2 for chil-

dren five and under, and \$5 all others.

For more information, to book a spot on the tour or to make camping reservations, contact Mitchell's Cavern at (760) 928-2596.

Dealing damage at Disney



LANCE CPL. J. J. BUTLER
Members of Fight Club 29, the Combat Center's mixed martial arts team, show off their medals from the Disney Martial Arts Festival at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, Calif., March 28. Fighters Nate Wolf, Omar Askew, and Dan Marquez earned gold medals. Jarret Edwards won a silver medal, and Blake Birchfield won a bronze medal. Fight Club 29's next tournament is the Pankration State Championship at Santa Ana College in Santa Ana, Calif., Sunday.

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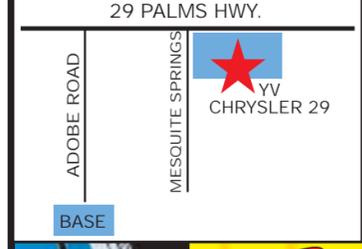
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