

OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

DECEMBER 4, 2009 SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957 VOL. 52 ISSUE 48

'Thundering Third' faces two-front engagement



LANCE CPL. CHAD J. PULLIAM

Marines and sailors with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, search for caves and hiding spots used by the Taliban from a mountain north of Golestan, Afghanistan, Nov. 25.

CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

FARAH PROVINCE, Afghanistan – At first glance, the area known as the Buji Bhasht Pass in southern Afghanistan looks much like the rest of Farah Province. Mountain peaks tower over vast desert valleys spotted with small adobe villages, herds of grazing animals and local farmers tilling their fields.

Although other areas in the region are proving relatively receptive to coalition forces, the pass and surrounding towns remain a haven for Taliban fighters.

Threats and kidnappings by armed Taliban fighters in the dead of the night have sent a wave of fear and compliance over local villagers. This forced obedience, coupled with a high number of insurgents lurking in nearby mountains, has produced an area hazardous to both coalition forces and local Afghans alike.

The danger was apparent when Marines and sailors from

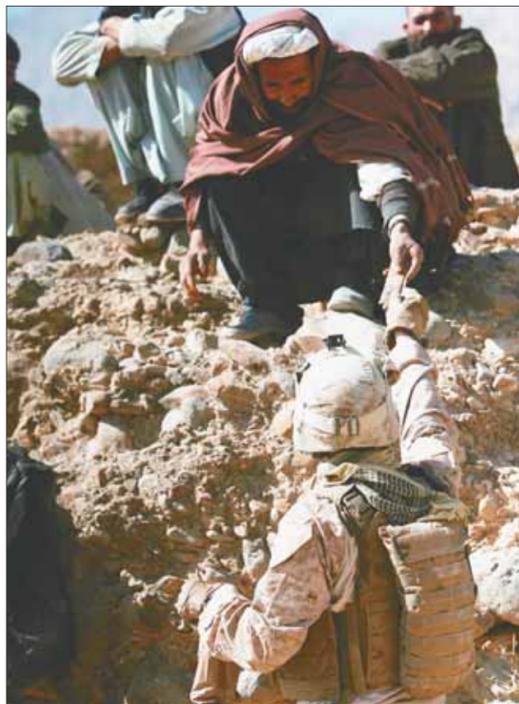
Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, visited surrounding towns of the Buji Bhasht Pass area as part of Operation North Star Nov. 15-17.

The key to securing the pass, which serves as a line of communication between the populated areas of Delaram and Golestan, lies in securing the trust and assistance of the local villagers. Before laying the foundation for a healthier and more permanent relationship with the villagers, coalition forces must first earn the respect and influence of the towns' elders.

"The elders are key to holding any kind of relationship with the local populace," said 1st Lt. Scott Riley, 25, the executive officer for Co. I. "They want to help the coalition forces. They want us there, and they make it well known, and the fact that the Taliban are still [in the area] really worries them."

The operation began their effort by visiting the town of Gund, which lies on the pass' southern doorstep, but the town

See ENGAGE, A8



CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Lance Cpl. Douglas C. Gilbert, a mortarman with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, hands a portion of his Meal Ready-to-Eat to a local Afghan man during a patrol outside the village of Gund, Afghanistan Nov. 17.

Your credit and you; weaning financial woes

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Many have seen the TV commercials where a man, dressed in pirate apparel, sings about his financial woes due to his poor credit score. For Combat Center personnel caught in a credit crunch, there are programs available which can help point them in the right financial direction.

Sandra Little, a personal financial management specialist with the installation's Personal Financial Management Program, said there are several ways Marines and sailors ruin their credit rating.

"Having too many inquiries, high balances on credit cards and loans, missed payments, new accounts and collections on your credit report lower your score," said the Fontana, Calif., native.

Lenders, such as banks and credit card companies, use credit scores to evaluate the potential risk posed by lending money to consumers and to mitigate losses due to bad debt. Credit scores are used to determine who qualifies for a loan, at what interest rate and what credit limits.

"Creditors like to see that consumers have no more than 30 percent of a balance on items owed," Little said.

"Focus on parting with as much as you can on a monthly basis to pay off or at least pay down debt owed," she continued.

"Whether it's the high interest item you attack first or the lowest balance, pick one option and stick to it, while asking minimum payments to the others, until the chosen one is fully paid off."

Most banks offer secured credit cards to consumers with poor or no credit history, which, if used properly, can also help raise a score.

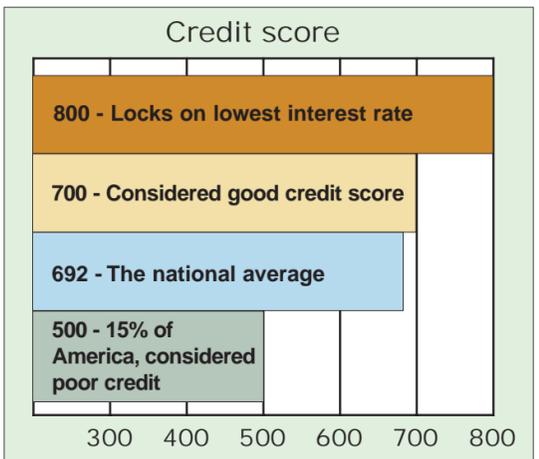
With a secured card, a consumer must first deposit between 100 and 200 percent of the total amount of credit desired. The cardholder of a secured credit card is still expected to make regular payments, but the card issuer has the option of recovering the cost of the deposit.

Little also said consumers should regularly check and monitor their credit report.

"Do not make major purchases, or apply for credit cards or loans without knowing your credit score first," she said.

According to the Fair and Accurate Credit Act of 2003, consumers are entitled to view a free copy of their credit report once each year from the three major reporting agencies – Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

To view a free copy of your credit report, visit the Congressionally-mandated Web site, <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>. For more information about the Personal Financial Management Program call 830-7342.



3rd Bn., 11th Marines returns from Afghanistan deployment

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

More than 120 Marines and sailors with Battery I, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, returned to the states and their loved ones' arms late Wednesday during a homecoming at Del Valle Field.

The battery, which deployed in June, primarily operated out of Helmand Province, Afghanistan as artillery support for Regimental Combat Team 3.

RCT-3 was also comprised of 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.; 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, out of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.; and 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, from Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

While in theater, 3rd Bn., 11th Marines' duties were to conduct "traditional artillery missions as well as provisional infantry tasks," said Capt. Chad Althiser, the battery's commanding officer, from Worcester, N.Y.

These tasks included many firsts for the regiment, such as being the first Marine Corps artillery unit to use helicopters to lift an M777-A2 Lightweight Howitzer in support of combat in Afghanistan, the first to deploy with rockets, cannons and counter-battery radars, and the first to use the M982 "Excalibur" Precision-Guided Extended-Range Artillery Projectile in combat, said Lt. Col. James Lewis, the battalion's commanding officer.

After a successful deployment, the men of Battery I were given a warm

welcome by their loved ones despite the chilly temperature and late hour.

"No others husbands could do what ours do," said Brittney King, the wife of Lance Cpl. Anthony King, a motor transport operator with the battery, before his arrival. "We definitely have the best [husbands] out there."

Brittney Cable, the wife of Cpl. Joshua Cable, a motor transport mechanic, played with her one-year-old daughter, Makenzie, and chatted with King to pass the time.

"Adjusting to the every day stuff was difficult," she said. "Our husbands do so much for us. I'm very grateful not only for what they do for us, but also what they do for the world."

More than 100 Marines and sailors with Headquarters Battery returned to the Combat Center today.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Capt. Chad Althiser, the commanding officer of Battery I, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, and native of Worcester, N.Y., shares a moment with his daughter after arriving at Del Valle Field with his battery in tow late Wednesday.



Training that builds ~ See A3



Hi Mom! ~ See A6



Underdogs over Bulldawgs ~ See B1



'Tis the season ~ See B1

Semper Moto

The chain is the weakest link

JOHN FLEMING

All motorcycles fall into one of the following types: chain drive, belt drive or shaft drive. Two of these drive systems – belt and shaft – require little maintenance and are very reliable. Chain drive systems – particularly here in the dusty, sandy conditions of the desert – take a beating, and must be regularly cleaned and lubricated to minimize costly wear and replacement.

Unfortunately, while cleaning and lubricating a chain is a relatively simple task, many riders neglect the work. As a result, chains and sprockets wear out quickly, and the only remedy is replacement. Two hundred fifty bucks, minimum.

I recently discovered a unique device that has transformed my chain maintenance world: an automatic chain oiler. Essentially, the system is comprised of an oil reservoir, a carburetor vacuum activated metering device, and an oil delivery tube that applies a drop of oil to the chain every thirty to forty seconds. All I have to do is fill the reservoir every couple of weeks and forget about it.

The proof of its effectiveness is the fact that my current motorcycle's chain and sprocket have been on the bike since new, with over 46,000 miles. That, my friend, is unheard of.

If you're interested in learning more, do a simple web search with the key words "automatic chain oiler", and you'll be directed to several site locations. Once you've installed an auto chain oiler, you'll never go back.

John Fleming is a rider coach with Cape Fox Professional Services, providing motorcycle safety training for Marines and sailors aboard the Combat Center. To submit your comments or contributions about motorcycling, his email is michael.j.fleming@usmc.mil.

School Liaison Information

Question: What is a LRE Placement?



Answer: We hear the term LRE all the time in special education, but many do not fully understand it. The concept of Least Restrictive Educational Placement, or LRE, refers to the placement of students with disabilities in the most advantageous educational environment suitable for their needs. Contrary to the beliefs of many teachers and parents, LRE does not mean every child should be placed in the regular classroom.

The placement of a student with a disability is the responsibility of the Eligibility Committee on Special Education, with the input of staff and the consent of parents. In order to accomplish this task, the Eligibility Committee has a variety of placements from which to choose. These placements range in levels of restriction-including class size, student-teacher ratio, length of program, and the degree of mainstreaming.

The placements below follow a path from least restrictive to most restrictive.

1. Regular class placement
2. Regular class placement with consulting teacher assistance
3. Regular class placement with some supportive services
4. Regular class placement with itinerant specialist assistance
5. Regular class placement with resource room assistance
6. Part-time mainstreaming
7. Full-time special class in a regular school
8. Special day school outside the school district
9. Residential school
10. Homebound instruction
11. Hospital or institution

For more information, please contact
smbplmsmccschoolliaison@usmc.mil or call 830-1574.

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Sgt. Robert Santo
Hometown: Las Vegas
Unit: Logistics Company, Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1
Job Title: Operations chief, motor transportation
Job Duties: Control of operations of all mobile vehicles in the squadron.
What do you like most about your job? "Working with Marines of many different jobs."
Significant achievements: "Being married for 10 years."
Hobbies: Drawing abstract art and cartoons.
Military service: 10 years
Time at Combat Center: 10 years



Hot Topics

MMEA, MONITORS VISIT

Headquarters Marine Corps Marine Manpower Enlisted Assignments will be aboard the Combat Center Jan. 5-6 to afford enlisted Marines the opportunity to have direct personal communication with their respective occupational field monitors for potential future assignments. Opportunities for first-term 2010 and career 2010 Marines to receive on-the-spot assignments and reenlistment authority will also be provided by the MMEA visit. See your unit Career Planner for times and location. For more information call 830-6171.

H1N1 VACCINE STILL AVAILABLE AT HOSPITAL

The Naval Hospital is now providing H1N1 vaccination to all who are 6 months to 49 years old who are dependents or work on base. Individuals over 49 years old with chronic health conditions can also receive an inactive vaccine. Contract workers can receive the vaccination at the commissary later this month. For more information call 830-2626 or 830-2002.

CHRIST CHAPEL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The Combat Center's Protestant Chapel will be hosting a nativity scene performance about the history of Christmas and the birth of Christ Dec. 13 at the chapel from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. For more information call 830-6464.

6TH ANNUAL TOYS FOR TOTS MOTORCYCLE POKER RUN

Z107.7 is hosting a motorcycle run beginning at Hutchins Harley-Davidson at 10 a.m. Saturday. Entry is a new unwrapped toy worth \$10. For information or to register visit http://www.hutchinsmotorsports.com.

Marine Corps History

Dec. 7, 1941

Marines defend against a Japanese "sneak-attack" on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Centerspeak

Who would you least want to be haunted by and why?

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



GUNNERY SGT. MICHAEL MEESE

COMPANY B, MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATIONS-ELECTRONICS SCHOOL

"Jeffrey Dahmer because he was creepy in real life and probably creepier as a ghost."



PFC. DONTAVIUS REED

HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE COMPANY, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT

"Michael Jackson because he looked scary while he was living and I don't want to see him dead."



MASTER GUNNERY SGT. DOUGLASS WEBSTER

G-3, HEADQUARTERS BATTALION

"My next ex-wife because that person doesn't exist."

SUDOKU #1648

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2009 HOMETOWN CONTENT

FOOTSIE

[puzzle Solutions on A4]

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ACROSS

1. Salary maxes
5. DJ Freed
9. Sport with shotguns
14. Help in a holdup
15. Classic cleanser brand
16. Hardly eager
17. "___ Lisa"
18. Bad day for Caesar
19. Ordered set
20. Uruguayan resort
23. 1980s TV's "Remington ___"
24. Minimal amounts
28. Many ER cases
30. Odin or Thor
31. Onetime Pan Am rival
32. Hard shot
36. Vega's constellation
38. Floral keepsakes
39. Algonquian-speaking people
42. ___-bitty
43. London lads
44. Not sharp or flat
45. Capote, on Broadway
46. Shoot the breeze
47. Surfacing stuff
49. Disney's Dwarfs, e.g.
51. "Piece of cake!"
56. 2001 Destiny's Child single
60. Be too nosy
63. Fen growth
64. Smokes, in brief
65. "Stormy Weather" singer Lena
66. Roof's edge
67. Totally confused
68. Jed Clampett's portrayer
69. Largest dwarf planet
70. Lamarr of film

DOWN

1. Counselors' workplaces
2. More or less
3. Tubular pasta
4. Solid, liquid or gas
5. Put up with
6. Weigh down
7. Explorer Tasman
8. Rhino plasty site
9. On the calendar
10. "M*A*S*H" locale
11. It can be bent or lent
12. ORD guesstimate
13. Lord's Prayer adjective
21. Greeting at a luau
22. ___-Kettering Institute
25. "Turf," to a diner
26. Packer's string
27. Full of back talk
29. The John B of song, e.g.
30. Grain for grinding
32. Revue bits
33. Anglican bishop's topper
34. Go on the fritz
35. Blue hue
37. "___-hoo!"
38. Memorial designer Maya ___
40. Student of Socrates
41. Classic column style
46. End a shutdown
48. Stage digressions
50. Kind of 25-Down
52. Slugging pitcher Owings
53. Model's asset
54. Raced at the Olympics
55. Lamb piece
57. Elder or alder
58. Part of YTD
59. Israel's Eshkol
60. "Thar ___ blows!"
61. San Francisco's ___ Hill
62. Surgeons' sites, briefly

OBSERVATION POST

Commanding General Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy

- Public Affairs Officer Jennie E. Haskamp
- Deputy Public Affairs Officer 1st Lt. Doy Demisick
- Public Affairs Chief Gunnery Sgt. Sergio Jimenez
- Press Chief/Editor Cpl. Nicholas M. Dunn
- Layout, Design Leslie Shaw

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LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Petty Officer 3rd Class Hazeem Petro, a builder with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4, based at Naval Surface Warfare Center Port Hueneme, Calif., holds Seaman Brian Tenderro, a builder with the battalion, steady Wednesday as he cuts part of a new building at the Combat Center. The battalion is updating facilities at Camp Wilson to support units conducting predeployment training.

NMCB-4 upgrades Camp Wilson's facilities

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen sailors from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 traveled from Naval Surface Warfare Center Port Hueneme, Calif., to construct a building at Camp Wilson, and are scheduled to complete the project Saturday.

The building is part of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force complex at the Combat Center, which will consist of several similar structures, to be used by units going through Enhanced Mojave Viper said Lance Barlow, an engineering technician with the Public Works Division here.

"The MAGTF compound here is going to have a total of five buildings," the La Quinta, Calif., native said. "They completed the first one about a month before this current one started. This current one is around 5,000 square feet and is the largest of all of them."

The project, which went under construction Oct. 26, will soon be completed under budget. Lower construction costs were achieved thanks in part to the use of Seabee labor.

"This type of building would have cost around \$1 million, but when it's all said and done, this project will be done at around \$100,000," he said. "They get great training, because those same structures are what they will be building when they go overseas."

Barlow said while the construction serves dual purposes, it depends on availability of personnel to accomplish.

"The only thing that holds up the process is the rotation of units," he said. "It's not always Seabees; we've had Marine units come out here to build other structures. We wait and schedule for a unit to be available to do the construction so we can get them trained, and benefit the base from it at a lower cost."

Sailors working on the structure said they not only received sufficient training from the venture, but a sense

of fulfillment as well.

"We do use projects like this as good training," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Boyardo Molina, the job supervisor, who is a native of Ventura County, Calif. "We get to help out the Marines with their training facilities by building this too. We don't know what this one is going to be used for, but it's good to be helping someone out with what is just normally training to us."

One of Molina's sailors, Petty Officer 3rd Class James Miskimen, a builder with the battalion, said this visit to the Combat Center has been a

production one in terms of building morale and supporting the Marine Corps.

"We got lucky this year coming out here," said the Port Hueneme, Calif., native. "We got a squad bay to stay in on mainside, which is pretty nice. It's great for both us and the Marines because you get new facilities out here, and we get to get out to another base and do something different for training."

The next construction project does not have a set date for its beginning or completion, but plans are in the works to set into motion in the near future.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Petty Officer 3rd Class James Miskimen, a builder with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4, based out of Naval Surface Warfare Center Port Hueneme, Calif., discusses a measurement with Petty Officer 2nd Class Boyardo Molina, the job supervisor, Wednesday at Camp Wilson.

Baker Co. Marine receives M1 Garand

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The M1 Garand rifle saw action in World War II, Korea and even the early years of Vietnam, despite the M14 service rifle's official adoption in 1957. With nearly 35 years of use in the Corps, many Marines have lived and died by their M1s, setting in stone a rich history and tradition behind the infantrymen's first standard-issue, semi-automatic service rifle.

Some veterans of past wars have established a program, called M1 for Vets, to pass on the tradition and glory of the rifle to today's warriors.

Cpl. Derrick Lewis, a squad leader with Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, received a Garand from the M1 for Vets program during a ceremony at Victory Field here Nov. 25.

"This rifle was given to Cpl. Lewis by a veteran of Korea who is in ill health," said Jim Gularte, a representative for the program and Vietnam veteran. "One of his last wishes was to pass on this M1 and we accomplished his dream today."

"This Marine was also a Baker Marine, and it was his wish to pass this rifle to another generation of Baker Marine," he said.

According to the program's Web site, M1 for Vets is "a nonprofit organization dedicated to financial and logistical support of returning Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and the Global War on Terror veterans."

Gularte presented the rifle to Lewis, and said giving the weapon to a 7th Marines warrior meant a lot to him.

"I was a sniper for 7th Marines from 1968-1970, so presenting this rifle to a Baker Company Marine means a lot to me," said Gularte, a San Diego native. "I represent a generation full of history, and this rifle represents the glory passed from my generation to the next."

Lewis also reenlisted during the ceremony and said he was proud to have been chosen to receive the weapon.

"It's really cool and humbling," said the Spanaway, Wash., native. "I feel honored to receive this rifle. There's so much history that comes with this weapon and I'm happy to accept it."

According to his award citation, Lewis received the rifle for his actions in Iraq from August 2008 to

February, where he assisted in key leader engagements and finding weapons caches.

First Lt. Evan Ota, Lewis' platoon commander in Iraq, said he nominated Lewis to receive the rifle because of his motivation and esprit de corps.

"Our [commanding officer] at the time asked me who our most locked on and hard-working Marine was, and Cpl. Lewis was at the top of that list," said Ota, a Kealahou, Hawaii, native. "Throughout the company, he's the guy

who raises our morale. There's a lot of pride, history and tradition in the M1 Garand, and he embodies the pride of our unit."

Gularte said this was the second time a Marine on the West Coast has received a rifle the organization, which originally began on the East Coast.

"We gave an M1 to a Marine from [1st Bn., 5th Marines] in May," he said. "But now that we're on the West Coast, we'll be handing out more and more rifles to combat veterans."



CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

Jim Gularte, a representative from the M1 for Vets program, presents Cpl. Derrick Lewis, a squad leader with Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, an M1 Garand rifle during a ceremony at Victory Field here Nov. 25.

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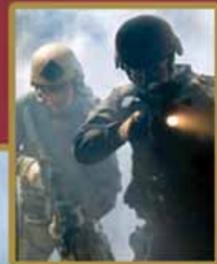
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NMCRS volunteers recognized for hard work, dedication

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – Marines, sailors and their family members sometimes need a financial helping hand. The volunteers with the Combat Center's Navy Marine Corps Relief Society do their best to fix these problems, minimizing the stressors many face – and they're good at it.

Nearly 75 volunteers with the NMCRS were recognized for their dedication and hard work during an appreciation luncheon at the Twentynine Palms Elks Lodge Wednesday.

Two volunteers, Margaret Fulton and Liz Temple, were recognized at the luncheon for dedicating more than 10,000 hours to the organization.

The numerous hours put in by the volunteers has resulted in a horde of loans provided to Marines and sailors, said Jenny Gonzalez, the chair of volunteers for the NMCRS.

"In October, we reached \$1.4 million in loans and grants given to Marines, sailors and their families," she said. "That was a really big thing for us."

Gonzalez said providing loans and grants is just a drop in the ocean compared to the other services the organization provides.

"We also have a program for expecting families called Budget for Babies," said the Stockton, Calif., native. "We give families a

basket full of \$75 worth of baby supplies, towels, clothes and the volunteers sew hand-made quilts for the babies.

"All NMCRS funding comes from donations from Marines, sailors, retirees and prior military members," Gonzalez said. "Every penny of donations goes right back to the Marines and sailors."

Ruth Hanft, a volunteer with NMCRS, has served with the organization for more than 39 years, and said being able to help Marines and sailors brings her joy.

"What we're doing helps the families in need," said the 94-year-old Columbus Junction, Iowa, native. "I think volunteerism is sort of a selfish thing because it makes me so happy."

NMCRS is a private, nonprofit organization which is sponsored by the Department of the Navy and operates nearly 250 offices throughout the Navy and Marine Corps. According to the organization's Web site, <http://www.nmcrs.org>, the mission of NMCRS is "to provide, in partnership with the Navy and Marine Corps, financial, educational and other assistance to members of the Naval services of the United States, eligible family members, and survivors when in need."

For more information about the NMCRS, visit their Web site or call 830-6323. To sign up, simply fill out an application at the NMCRS office, located in the Village Center.

New MRAP tackles the toughest terrain



CPL. MICHAEL CURVIN

The Mine Resistant Ambush Protected – All Terrain Vehicle, (right), offers more protection from roadside bombs as opposed to its predecessor, the humvee. The M-ATV's V-shaped hull is designed to redirect blasts away from its crew.

CPL. MICHAEL CURVIN
2ND MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – A tougher, more rugged vehicle can now be seen on the roads in the Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan's area of operations.

The Mine Resistant

Ambush Protected – All Terrain Vehicle arrived here Nov. 16, offering the same protection as larger MRAPs, but also the capabilities of performing missions traditionally carried out by smaller humvees.

Designed for small-unit combat operations, the M-ATV features a V-shaped

hull which helps deflect roadside-bomb explosions away from its crew.

The vehicle's design also delivers more comfort to the crew, as well as safety from different blast angles. Sporting an extended wheel base, the M-ATV keeps its crew a safe distance away from pressure-plate improvised explosive devices, many of which are designed to detonate when tires roll over them.

The M-ATV is not only mine, ballistic and IED-resistant, it can roll through the desert without all the bumps encountered with the humvee.

"The M-ATV is coming equipped with an independent suspension," Ramsey said. "Having independent suspension gives much better terrain negotiation."

Each wheel is able to move freely, regardless of the axle to which it's attached, allowing the M-ATV to easily navigate rocky terrain.

"It will allow Marines to get into more restrictive terrain," Ramsey said. "We think it's going to be a huge benefit for the Marines."

Most Marines will welcome the comfort, but many will also be excited about the power. Sporting a 7.2-liter diesel engine, the M-ATV can reach 30 miles per hour in less than 11 seconds, despite weighing more than 25,000 pounds.

The vehicle also tackles terrain at speeds the humvee could not, even when going up steep inclines.

"Going up hills is nothing for the M-ATV," said Lance Cpl. Mario Rivera, a motor transportation operator with Brigade Headquarters Group, MEB-Afghanistan. "Other vehicles take forever to go up. Not this one."

Ramsey said the brigade expects to receive more than 500 of the new vehicles in the coming weeks. The M-ATVs currently here will be used to train future operators.



CPL. MICHAEL CURVIN

Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan's first Mine Resistant Ambush Protected - All Terrain Vehicle rolls out of the cargo bay of an Air Force C-17 aircraft, Nov. 16 at Camp Bastion in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. MEB-Afghanistan is scheduled to receive more than 500 M-ATVs throughout the next two months.

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"The Shepherd of Bethlehem"
December 6th
at 7:30, 9:00, & 10:40 AM

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- Wednesday Night Church in Action - 7 P.M.
- Friday Night Interspersory Prayer - 7 P.M.

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Perry L. Ford, Senior Pastor

Service Times:
Sunday Morning Worship 9:45
Wednesday Night Bible Study 7:00

(760) 361-2450
4751 Adobe Rd.
29 Palms, Ca. 92277
spirit_truthworshipcenter@yahoo.com

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This Week's Spotlight Church

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www.oasiscommunitychurch.com

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<p>St. Joseph of Arimathea Episcopal Church God Loves You As If You Were His Only Child. Holy Eucharist 10:00 A.M. Onaga at Church St., Y.V. 365-7133</p>	<p>New Beginning Community Church Pastor Lynn Gary Thompson Christ Centered Church Sunday School - 9:30 am Adult & Youth Worship Service - 10:30 am Music & Fun - 6:30 pm 55922 29 Palms Hwy., Yucca Valley 760-910-5261</p>	<p>DESERT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Call for free van ride Sunday 10:00 A.M. - Worship Sunday School ages 4-10 yrs Visitors Welcome Sunday Concert Series • Call for info 29 Palms • 5688 Sunrise Drive • 361-0086</p>
<p>OASIS COMMUNITY CHURCH 6631 Utah Trail, 29 Palms Service Times Sunday 9:00 am Nursery provided at 9:00am 367-7812 www.oasiscommunitychurch.com</p>	<p>Yucca Valley Church of Religious Science Healing Lives & Building Dreams Reverend Ron Scott Sunday Celebration & Junior Church 10 AM 7434 Bannock Trail, Yucca Valley 365-2205 yvcrs.org</p>	<p>United Methodist Church of Twentynine Palms 6250 Mesquite Springs Road Phone: 367-7338 Sunday School: 8:00 a.m. - Worship: 9:00 a.m. (Child Care Provided) Reverend Lynn Reece "open hearts, open minds, open doors"</p>
<p>Two Mile Apostolic Tabernacle 74301 Two Mile Rd., 29 Palms (Next to Lucky Park) "Where Jesus Embraces You" Sundays 10:00 am 6:00 pm Wednesdays 7:30 pm Website: TwoMileApostolic.com 760-367-0080</p>	<p>First Baptist Church of 29 Palms Childcare Available Sunday Services Sunday School 9:15 am. Morning Worship 10:30 am. Evening Service 6:00 pm. Wednesday Services Prayer/Bible Study 6:30 pm. Young Married Couples Ministry 6:30 pm. www.fbc29.org 6414 Split Rock Ave., 29 Palms, CA 760-367-7561</p>	<p>Truth Tabernacle Apostolic Church 73493 29 Palms Hwy., 29 Palms, Ca 367-4185 Pastor Titus R. Burns Sunday Service: 10:00 AM Wednesday Night Bible Study: 7:00 PM Acts 2:38 "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."</p>

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Video teleconferencing brings deployed Marines, sailors 'home' to loved ones

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

In early American conflicts like World War II and Vietnam, paper and pencils were the only tools warriors used to stay connected with their loved ones. Families and friends could wait months for a letter, which often showed signs of being battered by the elements.

The times of relying on envelopes and stamps have changed. Now, the average American can instantly communicate with others through cell phones, text messages, e-mail and even through long-distance video teleconferencing.

The Combat Center's Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital is now making it possible for deployed Marines and sailors to stay in touch with spouses, parents, children and siblings from the hospital's maternity infant nursing department through video teleconferencing.

Sessions on the hospital VTC are available through appointments and are not limited to patients of the maternity ward.

The video teleconference room, connected to the Freedom Calls Foundation communication system, opened for patient use in April 2008 and was donated by John Harlow, the founder and executive director of the FCF.

The foundation, which was created five years ago, is a nonprofit service tailored specifically to keep deployed military members and their families connected, Harlow said.

Harlow said he got the idea for the FCF when he heard of a soldier who racked up a \$7,000 phone bill after calling his family from Iraq in 1993.

"I don't think service members should have to pay to talk to their loved ones," he said. "This is something that needed to be done. It's both financially

and technologically feasible for these troops to come home from a battlefield and be able to talk to their families – to literally come home."

Navy Capt. Maureen Pennington, the hospital's director of nursing services, said she believes the VTC may give many deserving warriors the peace of mind they yearn for while in theater.

The foundation was formed as a public charity supported solely by through donations from the public, Pennington said.

Since its opening, the VTC has connected several Marines and sailors with wives, parents and newborns in sessions lasting up to 45 minutes, Pennington said.

She said she remembers one VTC meeting in particular where a new mother called her husband in Bahrain to introduce him to his first child.

"The little baby was shown to him on the screen, and, when the young father saw his newborn for the first time, the look was priceless," she said.

More than 10,000 VTC sites exist across the country and can connect to locations like Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, Japan, Kuwait and Iraq, Harlow said.

Although there are already four sites in Iraq and one in Kuwait, the foundation is still working to get VTC sites established in Afghanistan by partnering with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command, Harlow said.

The VTC not only connects families after a new birth, it can also reunite families for birthdays, graduations, weddings and other special family events, according to the FCF Web site, <http://www.freedomcalls.org>.

To make an appointment e-mail Harlow at jharlow@freedomcall.org. To learn more about FCF visit their Web site.

"I don't think service members should have to pay to talk to their loved ones. This is something that needed to be done. It's both financially and technologically feasible for these troops to come home from a battlefield and be able to talk to their families – to literally come home."

~John Harlow

Founder and Executive Director
Freedom Calls Foundation

Marines, sailors battle Taliban, IEDs, flu in Afghanistan

LANCE CPL. WALTER MARINO

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Aside from the constant threat of enemy contact and roadside bombs, Marines throughout Afghanistan are taking an offensive posture against another potentially deadly enemy – the flu.

Nearly 400 Marines and sailors with Regimental Combat Team 7, and many other Marines throughout southern Afghanistan, have received the H1N1 vaccination in an effort to keep Marines on the frontlines healthy and in the fight.

"In Vietnam, a lot of people died from malaria. That could have been prevented," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Christian R. Johnroe, a corpsman with Preventive Medicine, Combat Logistics Regiment 2. "We are trying to keep people safe from what we can control."

According to a Nov. 11 World Health Organization news release, Afghanistan has seen 779 new H1N1 cases, including 11 deaths since July.

The corpsmen have received extensive training and education on the H1N1 virus and administering the vaccination, Johnroe said.

Small-unit leaders throughout Afghanistan have ensured their Marines and sailors receive the vaccine, and stressed the importance of remaining healthy as they continue to conduct counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.

The danger in H1N1 is the body's lack of

immunity to the virus, explained Seaman Michael J. Arroyo, a corpsman for RCT-7.

"That's why the vaccine is important. It's giving the body immunity," Arroyo said.

The H1N1 vaccine eliminates the specific threat of swine flu, but other flu viruses remain a possible threat. Arroyo advises Marines to get the seasonal flu shot as well and to practice proper hygiene.



TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt

The appointment of Rob Fleck as Executive Director of the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce was about a perfect a decision as the Board of Directors could possibly have made. Rob has it all. Let me explain.

Rob is a retired Marine. He served with distinction for better than 20 years. He retired as a Gunnery Sergeant October 1, 2006. His last tour of duty was right here aboard the Marine Corps base from July of 2001 until his retirement.

During the years of 2001-2006 Rob was not only an exemplary leader on the Marine Base but a tireless volunteer in Twentynine Palms. In fact, in 2005 Rob was singled out by our community as the Volunteer of the Year!

Rob is also a small business owner. In 2006 he opened a pro-shop for bowlers in The Bowladium and named it The Strike Zone. You can get anything you need that has to do with bowling in his complete shop, including superior bowling lessons, all kinds of bowling equipment, and the boring of a bowling ball to fit your hand.

Rob is arguably the finest bowler in the High Desert. He maintains an average of 218. That's about as good as it gets!!

More than all that, Rob is a great guy.

A real tough minded optimist.

The Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce is to be commended for their fine choice of a good person, a small business owner and a totally dedicated public servant.

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Holiday video greetings unite families

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and other members of the military who are separated from loved ones have a new way to send a special holiday greeting, thanks to Operation Best Wishes.

Families and service members aboard the Combat Center recorded video greetings at Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital until, said Brad Smith, the vice president of strate-

gic development for Pacific Marine Credit Union, one of the sponsors of the event.

"We make high quality, electronic recordings, which can be viewed by whomever when they get the access code to our Web site and internet access," said the Springfield, Ohio, native. "We also make CDs for them to watch as well. Each video message is archived for six months on the internet for everyone involved to view."

Smith explained the basic intent of the videos and how they have been used in other ways.

"The original concept was for family members to be able to send video messages for the holidays to whomever they know overseas," Smith said. "We've had it go more than one way, though. We've had military men and women make videos for their families back home. We're all glad to help out our military men and women however possible."

Seaman Recruit Chase Basnett, a culinary specialist at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital here, said it was a good experience for him to make a video for his family in Beaumont, Texas.

"This is my first Christmas away from home," said the Riverside, Calif., native. "It's nice to be able to send my family something for the holidays since I'm not going to be there."

Robyn Rimkus made a video for her deployed husband. She is married to Gunnery Sgt. Henry Rimkus, company gunnery sergeant, Headquarters and Service Company, 7th Marine Regiment.

"It's tough without him being there," the San Diego native said. "It's my first time without him here, but I know he'll be back safe."

For more information on Operation Best Wishes, go to <http://www.OperationBestWishes.com>, or call 760-430-6053.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Seaman Recruit Chase Basnett, a culinary specialist at the Combat Center's Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, records a message for his family at the hospital Tuesday. Operation Best Wishes makes videos for Marines and their families to send to one another over the holidays.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Sailors at the Combat Center's Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital laugh as they make a video for their friends overseas for the holidays. Operation Best Wishes connects families, friends and service members with those deployed overseas or separated within the states.

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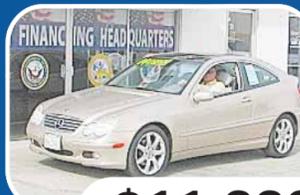
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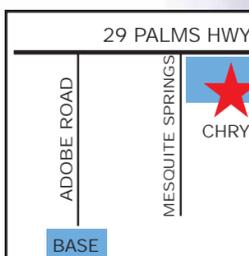
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TriWest wounded warrior support Web site earns Silver Award

SCOTT CELLEY
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

PHOENIX — TriWest Healthcare Alliance earned the Silver Award for Best Overall Internet Site for its Healing Heroes Portal at the 2009 eHealthcare Leadership Awards in Las Vegas.

The portal was designed specifically to help military and civilian healthcare coordinators streamline the transition process between caregivers, hospitals and clinics for recovering service members. It also provides TRICARE benefit news, information and links to related resources for recovering service members and their families.

"The Healing Heroes portal is the result of significant collaboration throughout TRICARE's 21-state west

region," said TriWest President and CEO David J. McIntyre, Jr. "TriWest worked with its Military Health System and [Veterans Affairs] partners to develop an online tool that can help wounded warriors as they go through the healing process. This award is a symbol of that work's success, which serves a much greater purpose."

The site offers a public side for wounded warriors, their families and caregivers as well as a password-protected site for healthcare coordinators to access a repository of contact information, tools and resources to better assist recovering service members.

The awards were announced at the 13th Annual Healthcare Internet Conference. Winning sites were selected from more than 1,100 entries.

Visit the Healing Heroes Portal at http://www.triwest.com/beneficiary/healing_heroes.

About TriWest

TriWest Healthcare Alliance partners with the Department of Defense to do "whatever it takes" to support the healthcare needs of 2.7 million members of America's military family. TriWest, a Phoenix-based corporation, provides access to cost-effective, high-quality health care in the 21-state TRICARE West Region. The Department of Defense recently presented TriWest with the 2009 National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Freedom Award — the highest recognition given to employers for their support of their employees who also serve in the National Guard and Reserve. Visit <http://www.triwest.com> for more information.

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 - 2008 DODGE CHALLENGER SRT-8.** 6.1 Hemi, black on black, 4,800 miles, \$40,000 OBO. 408-9088. 11/20/09
 - 2002 DODGE VIPER GTS.** Red with white stripes, 16,500 miles. \$40,000 OBO. 408-9088. 11/20/09
 - 5 RIMS.** Size 15, 6 lug, off-road heavy duty. \$180 OBO. Four Wrangler tires, worn only 7,000 miles. \$80 OBO. Call Jose 361-3509. 11/13/09
 - 1994 KAWASAKI KLR DUAL SPORT BIKE.** \$2,000. 910-9071. 11/6/09
- 1995 SUZUKI SAVAGE CRUISER MOTORCYCLE.** \$2,000. If interested call Heather at 490-2687. 10/2/09
- 1990 FORD F350 TRUCK.** Diesel, 90,000 on re-built engine, new turbo and clutch, stretch with 60" sleeper, 5 speed. Drives but needs tranny work. \$4,000. Call 447-0499. 10/2/09
- 1987 FORD F250 TRUCK.** Extra cab, diesel, four speed with overdrive. Set up for goose-neck or fifth wheel. \$2,850 OBO. Call 447-0499. 10/2/09
- MISC.**
- TWO TOBONO PAINTS, A MARE AND A GELDING.** Trying to sell or lease for \$225 per month per horse. Sell price is \$3,500 for mare, \$5,000 for gelding. OBO. Call Tim. Home 365-0831. Cell 883-0293. 12/4/09
 - TOY POODLE PUPPIES.** Also a young adult female. White or apricot. Healthy, shots. \$100 and up. 364-1133. 10/30/09
 - TREADMILL WITH T.V.** \$1000, weight bench w/ weights \$300, exercise bike \$ 175. Call 910-9052. 10/23/09
 - WANTED-PISTOL** 45 Caliber, military. 367-6030. 10/2/09
 - PURE SILVER MARINE CORPS COIN SET.** 35 years old. Asking only \$1,000. Marine Corps challenge coins, different prices. Olympic coins. Large oak entertainment center \$100. Must sell. 367-6030. 10/2/09

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

The limitations for ads are: 15-word limit, limit of two ads per household and the Trader may be used only

for 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.

Ads for housing rentals will not be considered for the Combat Center Trader.

To have a "House For Sale" ad run in the Observation Post, applicants must provide Permanent Change of Station orders and have the ad approved by Base Housing. This ensures the Combat Center Trader is not used for commercial real estate endeavors.

Ads are run on a first-come, first-serve, space available basis. If you have questions please call 830-3762.

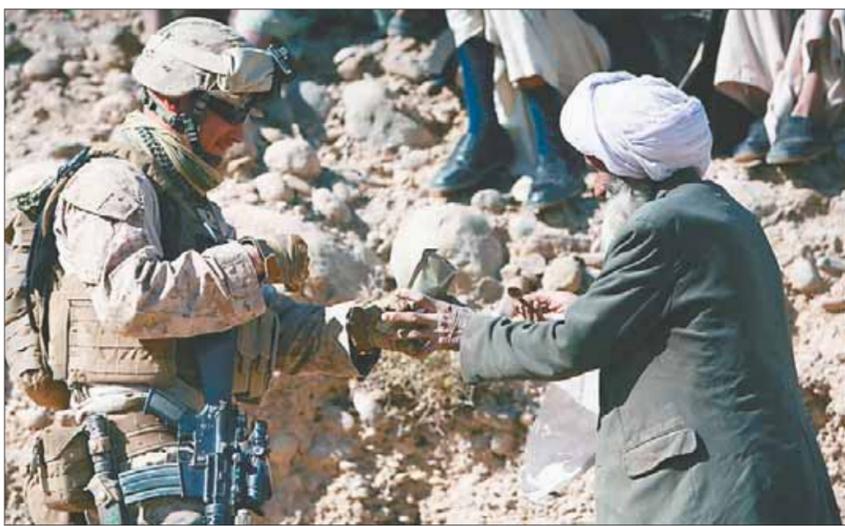
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CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Lance Cpl. Douglas C. Gilbert, a mortarman with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, opens a Meal Ready-to-Eat before giving it to an Afghan man during a patrol outside the village of Gund, Afghanistan Nov. 17. The patrol was part of Operation North Star, and was part of an attempt to improve relations with local Afghans. Gilbert is a 24-year-old from Clemmons, N.C.

ENGAGE, from A1

quickly proved to be unlike most other provincial areas.

On past patrols, Co. I has often been greeted by curious, but sociable farmers, or local children in search of gifts. Upon its arrival to Gund, the company was welcomed by Taliban gunfire from fighting positions in the surrounding mountains.

Undeterred by an enemy incapable of matching the Marines' firepower, the patrol continued with its mission, and attended a shura with the town's elders the following day.

The Taliban's fear that the elders' power and influence could encourage local Afghans to support the provisional government was evident shortly after the meeting had concluded.

During the shura, Taliban fighters in the surrounding hills again targeted the Marines with small-arms fire in a futile attempt to harass and disrupt any progressive discourse between the Marines and their Afghan hosts.

"[By] shooting at us, they're just trying to reinforce their presence there to the

locals. They wanted to let [the locals] know, 'Hey, we're still here, we see you talking to the coalition forces, and we don't like it,'" said Riley, a native of Wake Forest, N.C.

Taliban fighters increased their efforts to reinforce their influence over the region later in the day. The third attempt by insurgents targeted the Marines with an improvised explosive device.

"We turned around to look at how beautiful the valley was up there with all the mountains, when we saw a huge plume of smoke and dirt shoot up. Then we waited and eventually heard the explosion," said 2nd Lt. Robert Fafinski, a platoon commander with Co. I. "We were pretty sure somebody had died, and eventually we were able to learn from the locals that it was the IED emplacers."

The failed emplacement only strengthened the Marines' message that uninhibited Taliban movement and violence poses the same threat to local villagers as it does to coalition forces. As the operation moved to the nearby village of She Gosa Janobi, Co. I used the inci-

dent as an example of the Taliban's disregard for the safety of those Afghans living in the Buji Bhist area, and to promote coalition support of Afghan national security forces.

Another shura was held with the elders of She Gosa Janobi, while dismounted patrols through the town allowed the Marines to speak with villagers directly.

The Marines listened to local concerns about security, shared food with those in need, briefed local farmers and businessmen about new Afghan laws pertaining to agricultural fertilizer use, and dispersed hand-cranked radios.

"We were able to pass out a good number of [radios]," said Fafinski, from Chaska, Minn. "It was very rewarding for the Marines to see the joy on the Afghan faces, when they heard music in their villages for probably the first time ever."

In addition to playing music and the call for prayer, the radios will also help keep Afghans in the Buji Bhist area better informed about their role in safeguarding the local area.




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B1

MCCES wins base championship



CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

Players with the MCCES Eagles celebrate at midfield after knocking off the HQBN Bulldawgs 24-6, during the Commanding General's Intramural Football League Championship game Nov. 25 at Felix Field. The Eagles are slated to face Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., in the annual Best of the West Competition here Dec. 12.

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The MCCES Eagles topped off their season with a 24-6 victory over the Bulldawgs of HQBN during the Commanding General's Intramural Football League Championship game Nov. 25

at Felix Field here.

The win broke a three-year championship winning streak for the Bulldawgs.

Tu Tran, the head coach of the Eagles, said his team was ready for the Bulldawgs and played physical football.

"We watched a lot of tapes from our previous

games against them," Tran said. "We focused on containing their key players and played a tough, physical game."

After a scoreless first quarter, the Eagles struck first on an 18-yard scamper by running back Michael Dixon.

The Bulldawgs struggled to get anything going on offense, and throughout the game, lost the battle for field position.

Dixon scored again on an eight-yard toss from Eagles' quarterback James Rambo, to give MCCES a 14-0 lead going into halftime.

The Eagles started off the third quarter by tacking on a 30-yard field goal, which put them up 17-0.

The Bulldawgs knew they had to do something to get back into the game and showed signs of life when defensive back Nathaniel Snider intercepted a pass from

Rambo late in the third quarter. However, the Eagles' defense stepped up and made a big stop on a Bulldawgs fourth down attempt, getting the ball back with 3:34 left in the quarter.

The Bulldawgs finally put
See FOOTBALL, B3



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Cpl. Joey Aorahim, and Lance Cpls. Casey Chang, Michael Ehrart, and Jorge Flores, all radio technicians with 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, show off the Semper Fi bears they found for the scavenger hunt during the Single Marine Program Shopping Night Tuesday. Out of the six bears hidden throughout the store four of them were found by Marines from the 3rd CEB.

SMP Shopping Night puts Combat Center into Christmas spirit

ANDREW D. THORBURN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Laughter rang out at the sight of grown Marines whispering what they wanted for Christmas in Santa's ear during the 8th annual Single Marine Program Shopping Night at the Marine Corps Exchange Tuesday.

The event featured food, a Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 Tournament 2, and entertainment by Jiffy the Clown. Santa's

chair was also set up for children to request Christmas gifts.

Items were on sale and prizes for the raffle drawings were placed around the food table for everyone to see. The first drawing was held at 4:30 p.m. and patrons could register until the last drawing at 8 p.m. Prizes for the raffles included video games and gift certificates.

"This event is good for families and all the Marines here," said Staff Sgt. Jasper Key, an

instructor for the Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, who attended the event. "It is especially good for the younger Marines at the school who are spending their first holiday season away from their families by giving them a family atmosphere."

Jiffy the Clown roamed around the exchange making balloon animals for children

See SMP, B4

A new reason to be thankful

CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Everyone should have somewhere to go for the holidays. This past Thanksgiving, I didn't have a plan, nor did I have the time or the money to travel cross-country and celebrate with my family.

However, I still had something to be thankful for – I was adopted by the Detherage family in Rancho Mirage, Calif. They graciously invited me and two other Marines into their home to break bread with them and their long-time friends.

The trip down to their house was admittedly awkward, but still pleasant. I got to know Doug a little bit – he is the director of customer relations for Bimbo Bakeries U.S.A., who produces Entenmann's, Thomas, Oroweat and other bakery products, but plans on retiring in about a month.

Two other Marines accompanied me down to the Detherage residence, Pfc. Jarek Opheikens and Pvt. Eric Jedlicka, both students at the Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School. Neither of them has been at the Combat Center for more than a few weeks, so this was their first real trip off base.

When we arrived, Doug's wife Kathy had already begun preparing Thanksgiving dinner. A succulent blend of aromas drifted throughout the house, which could only be described as lavish, yet cozy.

It was a little awkward at first; it's always awkward to be the house

guest of people you've never met, but we soon warmed up to our surroundings. Right around the time we were getting comfortable, the other guests started to arrive.

Everyone in the house made the three of us feel more than welcome, offering us food and swapping anecdotes. They have all known each other for a long time, and were eager to share their hilarious stories from yesteryear and hear stories from us.

The only thing as good as the welcome we received that day was the food. There was a massive spread of turkey, ham, stuffing, green beans, peas, cranberries, potatoes, Brussels sprouts and an absolutely delicious corn souffle. For dessert, there was banana cream pie and pecan pie.

Since I was a child, I was raised to believe in the importance of family, and although I was unable to spend Thanksgiving with my own family, I was equally welcome as a member of another family in Rancho Mirage. They provided great food and great company, and made the day a memorable one.

The Adopt A Marine program aboard the base is hosted by the Single Marine Program, and affords Marines and sailors here the opportunity to experience the same generosity I witnessed on Thanksgiving. There's still time to sign up for Christmas and have something to be thankful for this holiday season. For more information, or to register to adopt or be adopted, call SMP at 830-4767.



Local Events

Music: Dave Gleason and The Golden Cadillacs

When: 7:30 p.m., Friday
Where: Pappy and Harriet's
53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information call 365-5956 or visit
<http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Twentynine Palms Chamber presents the annual Winter Light Parade

Description: The parade features floats of all kinds
When: 5:30 p.m., Saturday
Where: Downtown Twentynine Palms
For more information visit <http://www.29chamber.com>.

Yucca Valley Holiday Craft Fair

Description: More than 50 vendors display their hand-crafted unique gifts
When: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday
Where: Yucca Valley Community Center Complex
57090 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley
For more information call 369-7212 or visit
<http://www.yucca-valley.org>.

Yucca Valley Santa tour

Description: Santa visits several parks then goes to the town hall for the tree lighting ceremony
When: 4-6:30 p.m.
Where: 4 p.m. at Jacobs Park, 4:30 p.m. at Machris Park, 5 p.m. at Paradise Park, 5:30 p.m. Yucca Valley Town Hall, 6 p.m. The tree lighting ceremony begins
For more information call 369-7212 or visit
<http://www.yucca-valley.org>.

Art: Twentynine Palms Art Gallery December Show and Holiday Craft Faire

Description: Janet Braley and Ida Foreman to Exhibit at the gallery, and over 20 vendors to sell their crafts
When: Craft fair is 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, Art reception 12-3 p.m., Sunday
Where: 74055 Cottonwood Drive, Twentynine Palms
For more information call 367-7819 or visit
<http://www.29palmsartgallery.com>.

Theater: "The Dinosaur Musical"

Description: A delightful family-friendly musical
When: 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights, from Nov. 20 through Dec. 19. A Thursday performance will be held at 7 p.m. on Dec. 3, and a Sunday matinee at 2:30 p.m. Dec. 13.

Lower Desert

Music: Barry Manilow's "A Gift of Love" concert

Description: A five night holiday concert
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Saturday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
Where: McCallum Theatre
73000 Fred Waring Dr., Palm Desert
For more info call 340-ARTS or visit
<http://www.mccallumtheatre.com>.

Music: Willie Nelson

When: 8 p.m., Friday
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Pkwy., Indio
For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit
<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Music: Brian Wilson

Description: From the "Beach Boys"
When: 9 p.m., Friday
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
For more info call 888-999-1995 or visit
<http://www.hotwatercasino.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Dec. 4

6 p.m. – Whip It, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Couples Retreat, Rated PG-13
Midnight – The Stepfather, Rated PG-13

Saturday, Dec. 5

11 a.m. Deck the Halls, Rated PG
2 p.m. – Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs, Rated PG
6 p.m. – Astro Boy, Rated PG
9 p.m. – Cirque Du Freak, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Law Abiding Citizen, The Vampires Assistant, Rated R

Sunday, Dec. 6

2 p.m. – Where the Wild Things Are, Rated PG
6 p.m. – The Box, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Paranormal Activity, Rated R

Monday, Dec. 7

7 p.m. – Michael Jackson's This is It, Rated PG

Tuesday, Dec. 8

7 p.m. – Whip It, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, Dec. 9

7 p.m. – The Stepfather, Rated R

Thursday, Dec. 10

7 p.m. – Couples Retreat, Rated PG

Fainting goats movie not for faint hearted



COURTESY PHOTO

"The Men Who Stare at Goats" is based on a 2004 book by Jon Ronson, who interviewed some of the former participants in an experimental U.S. Army unit studying the application of hallucinogenic drugs and paranormal powers to modern warfare during the 1980s.

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

The Men Who Stare at Goats

Rated R

Welcome to the modern army, where psychic soldiers carry flowers instead of firearms, "see" things over impossible distances and try to run unscathed through solid walls.

It's not as far out as you might think. In fact, "The

Men Who Stare at Goats" is based on a 2004 book by Jon Ronson, who interviewed some of the former participants in an experimental U.S. Army unit studying the application of hallucinogenic drugs and paranormal powers to modern warfare during the 1980s.

As serious as the U.S. military may have been in this endeavor, however, it's played for looniness in this quirky comedy starring

George Clooney, Ewan McGregor, Kevin Spacey and Jeff Bridges.

Clooney is Lyn Cassidy, a specially trained "warrior monk" steeped in the mind-bending methods of his mentor, Bill Django (Bridges), a gung-ho former Vietnam vet who came home with a hippie-dippy dream of marrying U.S. military might with New Age flower power. Cassidy, once a special ops superstar who used classic rock music to trigger his out-of-body experiences, is now retired, but he finds himself back in action when he gets a mysterious "calling" to head to war-torn Iraq.

Spacey has a scenery-chewing turn as Larry Hooper, a would-be usurper with his own ideas about putting some mental muscle in the military – including using brain power to kill, researched through experiments to stop the heartbeat of goats by simply staring at them.

McGregor narrates the tale as a former small-town newspaper reporter based on the real-life Jon Ronson, here named Bob Wilton. He stumbles onto the story after he enlists in the army and becomes embedded with American troops in

Kuwait, where all the loose ends come together.

The movie has a few chuckle-worthy moments, but never quite coheres into a ho-ho whole. The oddity of its subject matter can't quite find a suitable groove between weird believability and preposterous put-on. The plot meanders wildly, and the actors never seem to know if they're in a drama or a comedy.

Obviously aiming for the neighborhood of "Dr. Strangelove," director Stanley Kubrick's brilliant, black-comedy Cold War spoof of the 1960s, "Goats" also cops a flashback feel from "Forrest Gump" and tries to tap the same satirical vein of Robert Altman's classic "M*A*S*H." It's like a Cohen Brothers movie without any of the Cohens' magical touch with characters, story or technique.

Strange and strained, "Goats" comes up a few bleats short of the belly laughs it intended. But it does offer an offbeat respite from the same old multiplex same-old – and a toe-tapping soundtrack in which Boston's "More Than a Feeling" is, indeed, more than a feeling.

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Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WalMart	MCAGCC			
7:00	7:10	7:15	7:50	8:30			
15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Saturday/Sunday							
Base Post Exchange	Building 1664	Subway	29 Palms Community Center	29 Palms Staters	Joshua Tree Park Blvd.	Stater Bros WalMart	Palm Springs Airport
10:00	10:25	10:30	10:40	10:45	11:00	11:10	11:45
4:00	4:25	4:30	*4:40	*4:45	*5:00	*5:10	*5:45
15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Saturday/Sunday							
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WalMart	MCAGCC			
12:00	12:10	12:15	12:50	1:35			
*6:00	*6:10	*6:15	*6:50	*7:35			

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FOOTBALL, from B1

points on the board in the fourth quarter when quarterback Charles Jefferson launched a 28-yard strike to running back Timothy Clark bringing the score to 17-6 with just 4:53 left in the game.

Time was not on the Bulldogs' side, but their defense held and forced MCCES to punt with 2:04 left to play. As the Eagles punted the ball, the Bulldogs fumbled the return, giving the MCCES special teams a chance to recover the loose ball. The Eagles' Wesley Lane came up with the ball, making any chance for a Bulldogs comeback nearly impossible.

The Eagles drove the nail in the coffin with 33 seconds left to go in the game as Rambo threw his second touchdown pass of the game to wide receiver Justin Simmons.

As the final seconds ran off the clock, the Eagles couldn't hold in the excitement any longer, and celebrat-

ed their victory at midfield.

Dixon, who was named the game's most valuable player, said beating the Bulldogs was a Thanksgiving treat.

"It feels great to beat Headquarters Battalion," said Dixon, a Baton Rouge, La., native. "Now I'm going to get fat on some turkey."

Mark Geletko, the head coach for the Bulldogs, said he was proud of his players' effort.

"We had a great season with a great group of tough, hardworking guys," said the Pittsburgh native. "These guys have been out here since July giving 100 percent and that's all you can ask from a player."

The Eagles' victory may be short-lived as they are currently preparing to take on the top team from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., in the Best of the West Competition here Dec. 12.

"We're going to focus on the fundamentals and get back to the basics in preparing for Miramar," Tran said.



CPL R. LOGAN KYLE

Ellis Hansel, a running back with the MCCES Eagles, turns the corner on a run against the HQBN Bulldogs during the Commanding General's Intramural Football League Championship game Nov. 25 at Felix Field. The Eagles dominated the game, winning 24-6, and will compete against the top team from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., in the Best of the West competition Dec. 12 at Felix Field.



CPL R. LOGAN KYLE

HQBN Bulldogs defensive lineman Andrew Hambright wraps up James Rambo, quarterback for the MCCES Eagles.

Fight Club 29 takes gold, silver, bronze at tournament



CPL NICOLE A. LAVINE

(From left to right) Fight Club 29 members Josh Olinger, Shawn Williams and Felipe Melendez were three of four fighters to claim awards for their performances in the Grapplers Experience Tournament in San Diego Nov. 21. Olinger and Melendez received gold for their weight classes while Williams walked away from his second fight with bronze in the heavyweight class. The team also earned a silver medal claimed by Klaus Springer, (not shown). So far this year, the team has earned gold medals in two Grapplers Experience Tournaments and two team silvers in Pankration nationals, states and armed forces championships. Within the team, there have emerged three national champions, five state champions, three armed forces champions, and seven qualifiers for the World Pankration team slated to compete in Poland in September 2010.

Athlete of the Week



Name: Adrian Robinson
Hometown: Twentynine Palms, Calif.
Unit: Mojave Vipers Young Marines detachment
Job title: Student
Recognition: Scored the highest on the Young Marines Physical Fitness Test
Sports goals: "I just want to keep getting faster on my run time."
Favorite aspect of the sport: "Doing situps."
Advice for aspiring athletes: "Just practice a lot and you will get better."

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LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Navy Lt. Bryan Davenport, the chaplain for 1st Tank Battalion, holds his son, 7-month-old Elijah, with his wife Natalie as they receive a balloon giraffe from Jiffy the Clown. Throughout the night, Jiffy entertained children and made balloon animals for Shopping Night patrons.

SMP, from B1

and Marines alike. Soon after the start of the event, the exchange announced Santa was parking his sleigh and would be in front of Sights and Sounds, the electronics section of the store, to pose for pictures and pass out Xbox T-shirts.

By the time Santa arrived at his chair, there was a long line of parents and eager children.

Once the line of families visiting Santa died down, Marines began to line up to have their pictures taken with him. Although many Marines were bigger and taller than Santa, he still had the Marines sit on his lap.

"The new generation can't let the 'kidness' in them go," said Sgt. Kristopher Mendoza, the communications chief for Battery M, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, about the Marines sitting on Santa's lap.

While some Marines visited Santa, others took part in a scavenger hunt. All they had to do for the hunt was find one of the six red Semper Fi Teddy Bears scattered throughout the store to receive gift cards and keep the bears they found.

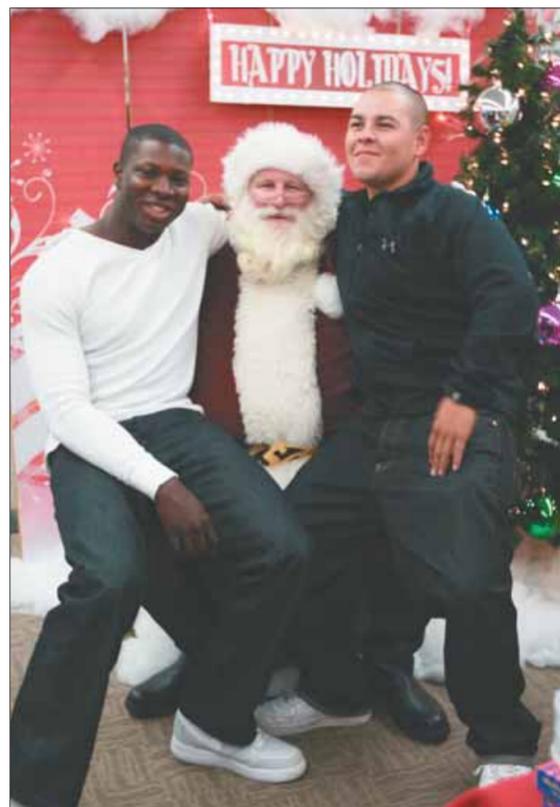
After the scavenger hunt, the Call of Duty tournament kicked off at the back of Sights and Sounds. More than 60 Marines participated in the tournament and competed for the grand prize – a brand new Xbox 360.

"The tournament and raffle drawings were great ideas," said Lance Cpl. David Powell, a supply administrator with Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Tank Battalion. The tournament is doing insanely well. The game was just released and is so popular that the sign-up was full



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Marines watch the unfolding battle of "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2" during the Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2 Tournament 2 held at the Single Marine Program Shopping Night Tuesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Pvt. Robert Tyree (left) and Pvt. Navarreterios Efrain, both students with Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, pose with Santa after telling him what they wanted for Christmas at the Single Marine Program Shopping Night Tuesday.

in 20 minutes, Powell said. During the event, Marines took advantage of the free gift wrapping service available near the barbershop.

Marines and families left the Shopping Night with gifts in hand, pockets a little lighter and knowing Santa had come to town and will be back later this month.

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- * 10:00 Cake & Punch
- * 11:00 & 1:00 Puppet Show
- * 4:00 - 8:00 MAIN EVENT

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