

OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS

April 22, 2011

Since 1957

Vol. 54 Issue 16

Corps' 'crown jewel' named Nation's best ... again



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment and Headquarters Battalion, conduct a house clearing operation March 19, at Range 220, as part of a joint training exercise with Army Green Berets. This type of premier training is one reason why the Combat Center received the 2011 Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence from the Department of Defense Thursday. The award recognizes the outstanding and innovative efforts of the people who operate and maintain U.S. military installations. The Combat Center is recognized as the world's largest combined arms, live-fire-and-maneuver training facility. During 2010, the installation provided predeployment training to more than 44,500 Marines, sailors, soldiers and partner nation military forces during 350 training days. Combat Center personnel completed monumental infrastructure and facility projects that greatly improved the quality of life for service members and their families. Installation leaders will receive the award during a ceremony at the Pentagon May 4.

Marines seek public comments to proposed land expansion

GUNNERY SGT. SERGIO JIMENEZ
PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHIEF

To meet tomorrow's challenges, Marines must train as they fight. To do this, the Combat Center must expand to be able to meet large-scale, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training requirements conducted by a Marine Expeditionary Brigade and its supportive elements, which can be as large as 20,000 personnel.

These were two key messages Marines and civilian personnel relayed to the public as they sought input during three public comment meetings held in the local communities of Joshua Tree, Ontario and Victorville April 12-14.

The meetings were part of a Department of the Navy effort on behalf of the Marine Corps to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to study alternatives to acquire training lands and establish airspace to expand the Combat Center boundary, according to a Marine Corps release.

The meetings were organ-

ized by a Marine Corps land acquisition public liaison team, composed of Marines, civilians, and Bureau of Land Management personnel, and in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration. Liaison officials described the meeting as a "respectful" and "cordial" exchange of information between the Marine Corps, private citizens, local, state, and national government officials, various off-road enthusiast groups, environmentalists and other stakeholders.

Attendees were asked to comment the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, a report released Feb. 25, which analyzes the impacts six land acquisition and associated airspace establishment alternatives, will have on affected stakeholders and 13 resource areas to the north, south, east and west of the installation.

The Draft EIS is undergoing a 90-day public comment period that ends May 26. According to an official

See LAND, A6

Family, friends say farewell to VMU-3

LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Family and friends of Marines and sailors of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3 said their last minute goodbyes as the unit headed out for a deployment to Afghanistan at the squadron headquarters Tuesday.

"I think a lot of the guys are excited to deploy," said Capt. Luke Roberts, the contract officer representative for VMU-3. "For some of them, this is the first time. For a lot of them, [they have had] multiple deployments, so they know what is coming.

"They have had a lot of time to prepare and I think everyone is ready to go," said the Shamburg, Ill., native.

As the Marines and sailors head to Helmand province, Afghanistan, they

See VMU-3, A4



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson, the communications and maintenance chief for Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, holds the 23-day-old daughter of his Marine, Cpl. Lucy Xiong, a field radio operator, during the squadron's departure to Helmand Province, Afghanistan Tuesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Sergeants Doug Laing [left] and Robert Weinharedt, both unmanned aerial vehicle technicians with the Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, play with Weinharedt's 8-month-old daughter Isabella, before boarding buses and heading to Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Tuesday.



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

A tattered flag is lowered at the Atlas Self Storage facility in Twentynine Palms by members of the Combat Center's Young Marines Program during a colors ceremony to replace a worn and faded flag with a new one Saturday.

Young Marines retire weathered flag

LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Not many people thought much of the ragged American flag flown at the Atlas Self Storage facility on Adobe Road in Twentynine Palms, and if they did, no one stopped to say anything.

The members of the Combat Center's Young Marines Program took it upon themselves to pay honor and respect to the Colors by replacing it with a new flag Saturday morning.

"This makes me very proud," said Jim Petras, the manager of Atlas Self Storage. "The flag means a lot, and to see these kids come out here is awesome. The leaders of the Young Marines do a great job."

Staff Sgt. Daniel Montegue, the unit commander for the Young Marine Program, saw the tattered flag on his way to work one day a few weeks prior.

Montegue decided to use the situation to teach his

See FLAG, A6



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Young Marine Lance Cpl. Mary Stuckey presents the tattered flag to Jim Petras, the manager of the Atlas Self Storage facility where it originally flew, after retiring it Saturday. The flag was replaced with a new one.

Recognize effects of excessive drinking

KRISTIN SHIVES

TRICARE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. This is a perfect opportunity to raise awareness of alcohol abuse and encourage people to make healthy, safe, responsible choices.

Heavy alcohol use remains a concern in the military, affecting both uniformed service members and their families. Service members often use alcohol to handle stress, boredom and loneliness. Others may also turn to alcohol to help cope with traumatic experiences from deployments.

The 2008 Department of Defense Health Related Behaviors among Active Duty Personnel survey found young men in each branch of service have significantly higher rates of heavy drinking compared to their civilian counterparts.

TRICARE beneficiaries can reduce their risk of becoming alcohol dependent by monitoring their alcohol consumption. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heavy drinking is considered more than two drinks per day for men and more than one drink per day for women. Binge drinking is considered five or more drinks during a single occasion for men and four or more drinks during a single occasion for women.

Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of many chronic problems, both medical and social. Some medical disorders associated with long-term alcohol abuse include liver, psychiatric, pancreatitis and cardiovascular problems. Excessive drinking can also cause unintentional injuries, such as resulting from traffic accidents, drowning and alcohol poisoning. Some social problems include the loss of a job or family problems.

There are many strategies people can use to cut back or quit drinking. The Department of Health & Human Services recommends several:

- Keep track of drinking and set a drinking limit.
- Avoid places where heavy drinking occurs.
- Ask for help from a doctor, family or friends.
- Keep only a limited supply of alcohol in the home.

TRICARE is here for those beneficiaries seeking help. Beneficiaries should discuss all their treatment options with their primary care manager. To use TRICARE coverage, active duty service members must access all care through their PCM. Service members must receive a referral from their PCM or military treatment facility (MTF) in order to seek outside treatment. Active duty family members do not need preauthorization for the first eight group therapy visits. Any applicable co-pays or cost-shares, based on the sponsor's status and TRICARE program will apply. Using network providers can reduce out-of-pocket costs. Beneficiaries can see specific coverage and limitations by filling out a profile at <http://www.tricare.mil>.

TRICARE beneficiaries can also find information on alcohol consumption, alcohol abuse and treatment by visiting <http://www.tricare.mil/alcohol> awareness.

TRICARE and the DoD launched an award winning multi-media campaign, That Guy, to reduce alcohol abuse in the military. It uses online and offline communication to encourage young enlisted personnel to reduce excessive drinking. It's a reminder to everyone: Don't be that guy!

For more information on drinking facts and treatment, visit <http://www.thatguy.com>.

Centerspeak

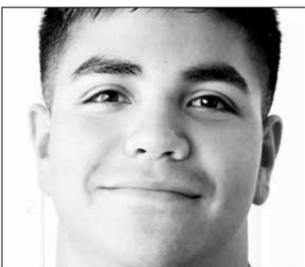
What have you done to reduce your carbon footprint or help the community?

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



PFC. BRANDON HARPER
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

“I commute to work every day on foot to keep the air clean.”



LANCE CPL. GIANFRANCO PAREDES
7TH ENGINEER SUPPORT BATTALION

“I turn off the lights when I leave a room. I don't like wasting electricity, and it costs money, even when I'm not the one paying for it.”



PFC. BEN DRYGALSKI
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

“I have done food drives in the past to help needy children.”



PFC. JONATHAN MURPHY
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

“I pick up trash if I see it, because I care and it just looks bad.”

Hot Topics

EASTER EGG HUNT AT LUCKIE PARK

The Twentynine Palms Easter Egg Hunt is presented at no cost by the Twentynine Palms Fire Department at 1 p.m. on Easter Sunday at the little league ballfield at Luckie Park located at Two Mile Road and Utah Trail. It is open to children through age 7.

EASTER BRUNCH AT O'CLUB

Visit the Combat Center Officers' Club Sunday, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., April 24, for a delicious Easter Brunch. Cost is \$19.95 for adults and \$9.95 for children. View the full menu on EatAndStayMCCS29.com. Reservations are required. Please call 830-6610 for reservations and more information.

MILITARY CHILD CARNIVAL

On Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., April 26, join Marine Corps Community Services and Lifelong Learning Library for the Month of the Military Child Carnival at Felix Field. Children of all ages are welcome. Come for a day of fun, games, face-painting, prizes, hot dogs and much more. For more information please call 830-6857.

AEROBICS MARATHON

From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., May 18, the East Gym and Fitness Center will be hosting an Aerobics Marathon. Spend the day or participate in any number of classes. Prize give away at the end of each class. Participants are encouraged to bring water and towels. For more information please call 830-3381.

Marine Corps History

April 21, 1951

Marine carrier-based airplanes made their first aerial contact with enemy planes over the Korean front lines. Captain Philip C. Delong shot down two YAK fighters and 1st Lt. Harold D. Daigh destroyed one more and damaged another in the heavily defended Pyongyang-Chinnanpo area.



Immediately report any suspicious activity which may be a sign of terrorism, including:

1. Surveillance
2. Suspicious questioning
3. Tests of security
4. Acquiring supplies
5. Suspicious persons
6. Trial runs
7. Deploying assets

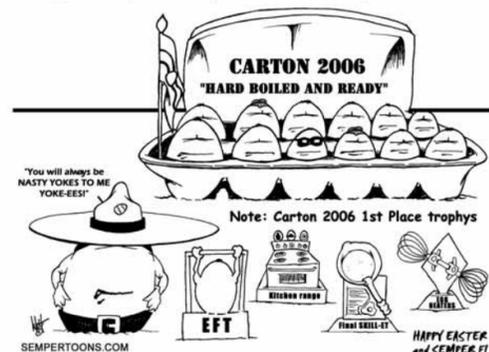
830-3937

PART 4 of a 4 PART SERIES

SemperToons Presents: How Easter Eggs get hard for Easter.

Prior to all EGGgraduations, the OMLET-DANT and Sgt-Egger of the Carton Corps gives each hardboiled a certificate of Eggenticity.

We at SemperToons are honored to present the graduating Carton of Easter 2006. These twelve tuff and motivated Hard boiled eggs are ready for coloring in every clime and place. Please join us in a round of EGG-plause!



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

SUDOKU #2152

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

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2010 HOMETOWN CONTENT

“OH, DEER!”

[Puzzle solutions on A7]

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20				21	22					23				
24			25					26						
			27			28	29		30		31	32	33	34
35	36	37				38		39						
40					41						42			
43				44						45				
46							47		48					
				49		50			51			52	53	54
55	56	57	58				59	60				61		
62						63				64	65			
66						67				68				
69						70				71				

ACROSS

1. Group belief
6. Sharif of “Funny Girl”
10. End-of-round signal
14. Rial spender
15. Spot on the Web
16. Lamb's nom de plume
17. ___ one's time (waited)
18. Part of QED
19. “___ fair in love ...”
20. Barely make, with “out”
21. Raw recruit
24. Rich source of fossils, perhaps
26. “Ich bin ___ Berliner”
27. Grid coach Amos Alonzo ___
30. Lure into crime
35. Puts together
38. '89 movie based on a '73 court decision
40. Baseball's Felipe or Moises

DOWN

1. Lama land
2. Eleniak of “Baywatch”
3. Corvair critic Ralph
4. Hydrocarbon suffix
5. Juicy morsels of gossip
6. Oil gp. since 1960
7. A+ or B-
8. Slack-jawed
9. Fetch, as stored data
10. Ward and June's younger, for short
11. Raines or Cinders
12. Cheery tune
13. Emit an intense beam
22. Hollywood's Hagen
23. Wayside retreats
25. Prefix meaning “false”
28. Pirate's potato
29. Ancient Germanic invaders
31. Intended prey for a “puddy tai”
32. ___ avis
33. Score after deuce
34. Confined, with “up”
35. Hawaiian fish, on menus
36. Touched down
37. Empire State Building climber
39. Singer James or Jones
41. In the doldrums
44. Medieval drudge
45. Borrowed cars, e.g.
48. Friend in the 'hood
50. Of a long-ago era
52. Tropical source of jelly
53. Any of three Indy winners
54. Nobel physicist Bohr
55. Cram into the overhead
56. “___ the mornin'!”
57. Yemeni port
58. Barris game show prop
59. Many a Disney character
60. Fortune teller's opening
65. Séance sound

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Carina Nicholas
Hometown: Scottsdale, Ariz.
Unit: Human Resorces Office
Job title: Human Resources Assistant
Job duties: Helping new employees onboard Combat Center and assisting the Human Resources Specialist
What do you like most about your job?: Helping those who are unemployed makes her “grateful to have a job.”
Significant achievements: Prior U.S. Navy and mother of two
Hobbies: Playing guitar and reading
Time at Combat Center: One year



OBSERVATION POST

Commanding General Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III

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Marines from Headquarters Battalion get into the prone at Range 103. They participated in a shooting competition as part of the unit's monthly field training exercise Tuesday.

HQBN Marines go back to basics

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. D. J. WU**

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines from both companies of the Combat Center's Headquarters Battalion headed to the ranges to take

on moving targets after a hike Tuesday.

The exercise was part of HQBN leadership efforts to expose their Marines to the combat and field-related training at least once a month.

The Marines who traditionally are in supporting roles in offices and have fewer chances to get to the field, jumped at the opportunity to fire rifles outside of a structured qualification course.

"I like getting out of the shop and do stuff like this," said Cpl. Michael Haynes, of the Exercise Support Division. "It's fun to just be out here, and it

See HQBN, A8



Sergeant Maj. James Walsh, the Headquarters Battalion sergeant major speaks to his Marines after they completed a unit cohesion shoot. The HQBN Marines were at Range 103 shooting moving targets as part of HQBN's monthly field training Tuesday.



Lance Cpl. Steven Brooks, an artillery systems technician for the Exercise Support Division, empties out spent brass from his Kevlar after helping clean Range 103. Marines were at the ranges for a Headquarters Battalion cohesion shoot.

Steak Team Mission keeps tails wagging



SGT. EARNEST BARNES

Lance Cpl. Taylor Slay, a Baton Rouge, La., native, shares his steak with Mac, a military working dog with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, as Boerne, Texas, native Lance Cpl. Wayne Snelling [left], looks on April 17. The Steak Team Mission, a privately funded, nonprofit organization from Dallas, served the Marines and sailors of 2nd Marine Division (Forward) steak dinners at seven separate locations within a five-day period. Mac, whose unit is with the 1st Marine Division out of Camp Pendleton, Calif., was in the right place at the right time to partake in the treat.

SJA CORNER

Divorce: Retirement, alimony

CAPT. DAVID SEGRAVES

LEGAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE

Divorce can end a family.

Service members and their spouses have many questions surrounding this difficult event. Other than child custody and child support, the largest concern most family members have is division of military retirement and alimony.

Military retirement and alimony (or spousal support, as it is called in California) are separate matters. A service member's military retirement is a property right and subject to division, as are all other assets in a marriage. In California, the courts follow a system known as the "Brown Formula" to divide the retirement as community property.

The court takes the number of months of the marriage during military service and divides it by the total amount of time the service member served in the military. Then the court divides that by half and awards it to the civilian spouse. For example, if a Marine serves twenty years and he is married for the last ten years, getting divorced the day after receiving his DD214, the court will do the following calculation: Take 120 months [10 years] of marriage and divide it by 240 months [20 years] of service. Next the court divided that percentage in half. The final percentage left is the percentage on monetary benefits the civilian spouse will receive.

In addition to division of the military retirement, the court may award additional spousal support. Unlike child support which has strict guidelines and formulas, the court only has the goal of helping the supported party "be self-supporting within a reasonable

period of time." The rule of thumb for "reasonable period of time" is "one-half the length of the marriage." While courts use this as a general guideline for determining the length of spousal support, the court is free to award no support or permanent support as it sees fit.

Under Family Code 4320, the court has multiple circumstances it must consider. The main areas the court will investigate include the earning capacity of the individuals, their childcare responsibilities, the duration of the marriage and the age and health of the parties. The court will also consider if the party seeking support contributed to the attainment of education, training or a career position and if the party seeking support had their earning capacity affected by periods of unemployment to stay home with children.

Another thing to consider when discussing military retirement and spousal support is timing. Spousal support occurs as soon as a court orders it. However, a division of military retirement may take years to ripen into actual payments. Some divorce settlement agreements set up arrangements where spousal support continues until the service member retires, and then civilian spouse begins to receive their share of the retirement.

As in so many other legal situations, every potential client's case is different.

Individuals concerned with specific questions about their rights or responsibilities regarding division of military retirement or spousal support should contact the Legal Assistance Office at 830-6111 and schedule an appointment with an attorney.

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LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Corporal Joseph Bellevue, an unmanned aerial system avionics technician with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, receives a care bag from a Veterans of Foreign Wars member as he boards the bus during the VMU-3 departure to Helmand province, Afghanistan, Tuesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Lance Cpl. Joshua Balboa, a generator mechanic with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, tries to guide his year-and-a-half-old nephew, Cameron Wingenroth, back to the rest of the family during the VMU-3 departure to Helmand province, Afghanistan, Tuesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Corporal Bo Schilling, a generator mechanic with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, holds his wife Cpl. Chelsea Schilling, a supply administration and operations specialist with VMU-3, one last time before boarding the bus during the VMU-3 departure to Helmand province, Afghanistan, Tuesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Corporal Jerrod Tisko [far left], an unmanned aerial system avionics technician with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, photographs the event for his friends who are deploying to Afghanistan during the VMU-3 departure to Helmand province, Afghanistan, Tuesday.

VMU-3, from A1

said they know they underwent the best training possible to prepare for their upcoming duty.

"That's been the most realistic training coming out to Mojave Viper," said 1st Lt. David Thomas, a communications officer with the unit. "Everything that we have done has prepared us a lot, even from our experience from last year is a huge improvement."

As they loaded the buses, everyone received a care bag from volunteers of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter. The post has "adopted" the unit and is planning to send more care packages at the halfway point of the deployment, which is

sometime this summer.

For the loved ones left behind, the unit's family readiness officer has activities to help them through this difficult time.

"We have several different events going on while they are gone," said Gisela Lemon, the VMU-3 FRO. "One of them is morale calendars. The spouses are creating a calendar for every month they are deployed and each day has pictures in it and different sayings [to help them along.]"

"We are also going to do weekly video teleconferences here for the Marines who wire in initially," said Lemon. "Then we are going to try to expand to some of the outer bases. So it is going to give spouses and Marines some face time."

MCCS places dollar value on volunteers worth \$2 million

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
DIANE DURDEN**

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Marine Corps Community Services recognized its volunteer force during a ceremony Monday for the thousands of hours of service they've provided to the Combat Center during the 2010 calendar year.

The ceremony began with Katherine Catlin, the MCCS Director, presenting the Combat Center's commanding general, Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, with a mock check in the amount of \$2.15 million, representing more

than 92,000 hours of volunteer work last year.

Marine Corps Family Team Building director Perry Ford said it's important to recognize the volunteers for the many hours they have provided to the installation.

"There's no way you can't recognize the faithfulness of the people that come out and give their services," Ford said.

With hundreds of volunteers to recognize, representatives from units and organizations accepted the awards on behalf of their volunteers, presenting the individual awards at smaller, more inti-

mate ceremonies later.

Allie Nelson, Family Readiness Officer, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, credits her unit's volunteers with providing the additional time needed to get things done.

"Without our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to accomplish so much for our families," Nelson said.

Putting welcome aboard packages together and reaching out to other family members are just a couple of things her unit's volunteers do.

"The volunteers are the foundation of the Family Readiness Program," said Gisela Lemon, the FRO for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3. "They take real ownership of it, creating a 'big-sister' type network."

The VMU-3 volunteers began an initiative called "Meals for Moms," where several spouses plan and create meals that can be frozen and easily cooked for new moms who deliver their babies while their Marine husbands are deployed.

The program not only provides the new mom with a ready-made meal, but also allows the volunteers opportunities to check-in with each other.

Spouses are not the only volunteers aboard the installation. There are several Marines who volunteer with the Single Marine Program and the Young Marine Program. They were also recognized.

Anyone interested in volunteering with any department aboard the Combat Center should contact Mike Dearstine, Family Readiness Program Trainer, by e-mailing eugene.dearstine@usmc.mil or calling 830-3114.



Brigadier Gen. H. Stacy Clardy, III, the Combat Center's commanding general, accepts a check from Marine Corps Community Services Director Katherine Catlin during a ceremony to recognize the Combat Center's volunteers April 18. The check, in the amount of \$2.16 million, represents the value of more than 92,000 labor hours contributed by Combat Center volunteers during 2010.



Jillian King, family readiness officer, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, accepts a volunteer award on behalf of her unit from Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy, III, the Combat Center's commanding general during a ceremony to recognize the installation volunteers April 18.



Allie Nelson, family readiness officer, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, accepts the awards for the unit's volunteers from Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy, III, the Combat Center's commanding general, during a ceremony to recognize the Combat Center's volunteers April 18.

Earth Day motivates Marines



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Marines find some friendly competition at the end of the Earth Day 5K run at the physical fitness test course Wednesday. The run was held to raise awareness for Earth Day today and encourage Combat Center personnel to get outside and do something to make the Earth a better place. Members of the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs office will set up a booth outside the commissary today and provide handouts with information on how to preserve the environment today outside the Combat Center's Commissary which include handouts and information on how to keep the environment healthy.

LAND, from A1

Marine Corps statement, this period is double the 45 days required by law. According to officials, a total of 654 people attended the three public meetings and provided 368 written and 44 verbal comments. Comments may be made on the Internet at <http://www.marines.mil/unit/29palms/las>.

Following the public comment period, updates to the Draft EIS will be made and a Final EIS will be published January 2012. After a 30-day wait period that allows for public review of the Final EIS, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy will choose an alternative and issue a Record of Decision to be published in the Federal Register in April 2012. The chosen alternative will be submitted to Congress for a final decision.

During the public meetings, the public liaison team, composed of several dozen Marines and civilians, answered questions and addressed stakeholder concerns using 26 color posters at eight stations, set up in a circular pattern in an open house format. Officials designed the layout to make it as easy as possible for the maximum number of attendees to ask questions about their specific concerns and to submit comments on the spot.

The posters used visually appealing images and graphics to present detailed information and mitigation efforts and impacts on subjects such as biological and cultural resources, air quality, recreation, economic factors, noise impacts, public health and safety.

Stacks of comment sheets were placed on tables in the center of the room, several computer terminals were provided for online comments, and even a stenographer was available to take oral comments. The comment system also allows for comments submitted in foreign languages.

The subject matter experts informed the public on the Marine Corps' mission and role in the process and helped translate military-speak found in the Draft EIS, such as their requirement for "a minimum of three maneuver corridors for a ground combat element

comprised of three battalions that are simultaneously maneuvering for 48-72 hours with combined-arms live fire and the accompanying special-use airspace," into layman's terms.

The Marines were also there to speak directly to the public about the importance of realistic training based on their personal experience.

"Combat requires detailed coordination between hundreds of intricate moving parts," said Gunnery Sgt. Michael A. Lamar, a member of the public liaison team. "This forces the commander

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"Lack of coordination on the battlefield can have another, more significant impact. It's an environment where you only get one chance to get it right, and where getting it wrong, can have deadly consequences."

—GUNNERY SGT. MICHAEL A. LAMAR

”

to focus not just on the mission, but on the logistics that support that mission. If you don't have the beans, bullets and bandages when you get to the fight, you won't be successful," he said.

"Lack of coordination on the battlefield can have another, more significant impact," said Lamar. "It's an environment where you only get one chance to get it right, and where getting it wrong, can have deadly consequences.

Throughout our history, Marines have been successful, in large part, because of our ability to destroy our enemy's will to fight by using tactics and techniques developed through the coordination of combined arms and an overwhelming force," said Lamar. "The realistic training available at the Combat Center enables us to practice this art in a safe setting before we deploy."

Bottom line, many lives and towns are saved when the enemy has no desire to fight, he said.

Many opponents of the expansion in attendance told the Marines, that although they have a deep and sincere respect for the military, they remain adamant in their oppo-

sition to any proposal that takes large portions of their recreational land.

Opposition by some groups is understandable and expected, said Stephan Lomax, a range safety inspector at the Combat Center and member of the public liaison team. The Marine Corps welcomes all constructive comments to find an alternative that balances the needs of the Marine Corps and the affected residents and groups.

In fact, "Alternative Six" was created in response to the nearly 20,000 comments received from interested stakeholders at the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) public scoping meetings held in December 2008, said Lomax.

As a result, this is currently the Marine Corps' preferred alternative because it accommodates continued public access to about 40,000 acres in the West Study Area for 10 months out of the year when Marines are not using the area during two months of MEB training, he said.

Although many attendees said they appreciated the time and effort the Marines took to present their analysis, many vocal opponents, such as small business owners, came to have their voices heard.

"I want to make sure we can preserve what we can, because the Johnson Valley OHV [Off Highway Vehicle] area is very important to the off-road community," said Tony Pellegrino, who owns an off-road vehicle parts company in Simi Valley, Calif. Pellegrino also said he has "great" concerns about the negative economic impact he claims the expansion will have on his and other businesses. "That's why many of us want the expansion to head out east instead of out here."

Some residents who own land near the study areas said they are anxious about any drop in property values that may result by any real or perceived increase in noise and deterioration in air quality. Some environmentalists and other natural biological and culture resources groups, attended to laud the Marine Corps for their preservation efforts, and to hear how officials will mitigate any possible negative impacts on these resources if land expansion is approved.

Meeting organizers said

although great efforts went into addressing these and other concerns in the Draft EIS, they were very interested in public comments on how they could do better and for ideas on possible solutions in areas of disagreement.

In general, many opponents agreed with Pellegrino, and were against expansion to the west, claiming it will have negative impacts to the off-highway vehicle community. Most opponents favored Alternative Three and expansion to the east, while some stakeholder groups indicated modification of Alternate Six boundaries may reduce opposition to that alternative.

Overall, officials hailed the public meetings as a success and said they appreciated the attendees' respectful tone, their openness and willingness to seek a balanced alternative.

Finding a solution is critical to organizers, who cite a Center for Naval Analysis study, which found that the Combat Center is currently the only place in the nation capable of supporting large scale live fire exercises.

Expansion of the Combat Center is the best way to ensure Marines are trained as they fight, said Lamar. The installation already has the organization, infrastructure and the capability limited only by space.

"More than 90 percent of the Marines deploying to combat receive pre-deployment training at the Combat Center," he told an off-road enthusiast at the Alternative Six station.

Communication and collaboration is the key, said Lamar. This is why the most important message his team sent out at each of the three meetings was "Please provide us with your comments before you leave."

Public comments give the community an important and necessary voice in the process. "Your comments will help us provide the most accurate analysis to Congress and the President," Lamar said to a young off-road enthusiast. "They will make the final decision."

For more information on the Draft EIS and Land Acquisition/Airspace Establishment Study please visit the official website at <http://www.marines.mil/unit/29palms/las/>.

Editor's note: Cpl. M. C. Nerl contributed to this story.



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

A Combat Center Young Marine folds a the tattered flag previously flown at the Atlas Self Storage facility, after retiring it Saturday. The flag was replaced with a new one during a colors ceremony.

FLAG, from A1

Young Marines a valuable lesson.

"We wanted [the Young Marines] to understand that it's not just a flag, it's our country," Montague said. "It's a reputation and sacrifice that we respect by honoring our flag."

The group also got to practice how to conduct an official colors ceremony. But, it didn't go as smoothly as they expected.

It was a struggle to fold the faded flag after it came

down after replacing it, because the flag was torn at nearly every seam, particularly the ones joining the red and white stripes.

"I have a lot of pride right now," said Mary Stuckey, a Young Marines lance corporal in who participated in the color ceremony. "Seeing it the way it was and how it is now, it feels good."

For more information on the Young Marines Program or upcoming events, contact Montague at 910-545-1576.

Marines walk to fight cancer



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Lance Cpl. Andrew Wolf and Lance Cpl. Timothy Struble, Marines from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, walk during the Relay for Life for the "Ooh-rah for Tah Tahs" team Saturday at Yucca Valley High School. "Ooh-Rah for Tah Tahs," which focused on bringing awareness to breast cancer, was one of 34 teams present at the relay to help fight against all types of cancer. The 24-hour event helped raise money for cancer treatment research and patient services. Many teams camped out on the football track and rotated walkers.

'Free Bread Friday' lives on as 'Thank You for Your Service' program

ASYMCA PRESS RELEASE

The "Free Bread Friday Program" has been renamed to the "Thank You for Your Service Program." This program will be able to encompass much more than just giving bread to active duty service members and their families. We will be giving out groceries, Girl Scout cookies, and any other free items that donors would like to give to the active duty military and their families. This is a chance for the donors to say Thank You for Your Service in a way that benefits both the donors and the military family's station aboard the military base.

The ASYMCA needs volunteers to help make this happen on a regular basis. Volunteers are needed to:

Unload the items at the ASYMCA Admin Building

Set-up and display items for distribution

Pick-up items when needed from the donors

Check Military ID's / Distribute items

If you would like to volunteer for this program or any other program we have, please call Kelly at 830-7481, e-mail Kelly at ymca1@roadrunner.com or come into building 192 and sign up.

UC San Diego Student Veteran Organization lunch

The University of California San Diego Student Veteran Organization will be hosting a transfer admit day May 7 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to discuss financial aid, campus life and the organization's role in veteran students' college experience in an open forum. Veterans, active duty service members and their families are invited. A free lunch buffet at Porter's Pub in San Diego will be provided. For more information, e-mail the SVO at studentvets@ucsd.edu.



Whatever you're looking for, you can find it in the **Observation Post Classified section**

Combat Center Challenge schedule

EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Paintball	April 26-28	1 p.m.	Paintball Course (Outdoor Adventure)
Basketball	April 25-28	5 p.m.	West Gym and Fitness Center
Raquetball	April 25	11 a.m. and 6 p.m.	East Gym and Fitness Center
Water Polo	April 25-28	1 p.m.	Training Tank
Bench Press	April 26	3 p.m.	East Gym and fitness Center
Volleyball	April 27-28	2 p.m.	East Gym Volleyball Court
Golf	April 26	7 a.m.	Golf Course
First to Fight	April 28	9 a.m.	The Zone
Combat Fitness Test	April 29	7 a.m.	Felix Field
Sit-Up & Pull Up Competition	April 29	8 a.m.	Felix Field
M-16 Assemble/Disassemble	April 29	8 a.m.	Felix Field
Dummy Grenade Toss	April 29	8 a.m.	Felix Field
Jousting/King of the Hill	April 29	9 a.m.	Felix Field
Corpsman	April 29	9 a.m.	Felix Field
Hummer Pull	April 29	10 a.m.	Felix Field
Tug of War	April 29	11 a.m.	Felix Field
Awards Ceremony	April 29	1 p.m.	Felix Field

All Combat Center personnel and their families are encouraged to attend and to support their favorite team.

Combat Center Religious Services

Sunday

Immaculate Heart of Mary

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 p.m. - Choir Practice

4:15 p.m. - Confessions+

4:30 p.m. - Rosary

5 p.m. - Catholic Mass

Christ Chapel

9 a.m. - Calvary Fellowship

(Contemporary Worship*)

9 a.m. - Children's Church

10:30 a.m. - Redemption (A

blend of traditional and con-

temporary worship

10:45 a.m. - Children's

Church*)

Weekday Events

Immaculate Heart of Mary

Mon.-Fri. 11:45 a.m.-

Catholic Mass

Christ Chapel

Mon. - Fri., noon - Prayer

Tuesday

Christ Chapel

9 a.m. - Christian Women's

Fellowship* (Sept.-May)

Immaculate Heart of Mary

3:30-5:30 p.m. - Military

Council of Catholic Women

Wednesday

Immaculate Heart of Mary

First Wednesday, 6 p.m. -

Baptism preparation class

and 7 p.m. - Knights of

Columbus

Thursday

Immaculate Heart of Mary

9 a.m. - Adult Class

6 p.m. - Children RCIA

6:30 p.m. - RCIA (Sept.-April)

7 p.m. - Gr. 7 and

Confirmation

Friday

Immaculate Heart of Mary

First Friday each month,

12:15 p.m.,

4:30 p.m. - Exposition/

Adoration Most Blessed

Sacrament

Legend

* Indicates child care is pro-

vided

+ Call 830-6456/6482 for

confession appointments

Muslim prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 87.

Jewish prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 93.

For more information call 830-5430.

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

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CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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W	O	N	G			S	Y	N	E	S	P	A	R	S

Combat Center Trader Ads

AUTOMOTIVE

CLASSIC 1957 CHEVY PICKUP.

350 engine, 3 speed automatic, \$6,900 OBO. 361-3509.

2008 TOYOTA YARIS. \$10,000 OBO.

Approximately 58K miles. Good condition. Consistent maintenance. Call 622-4562.

C5 CORVETTE FRONT BRA. \$50.

413-4015.

2007 SUZUKI BOULEVARD. Black

and chrome, 1600 CC, \$3,000 in extras included. Asking \$12,500. 401-3739.

2006 PONTIAC SOLSTICE. Fully

loaded, excellent condition, 21,500 miles. \$13,500. Call 819-2773.

MISC.

BABY ITEMS: Solid wood baby crib, baby walker, stroller, wooden horse and more. All in excellent condition. Call 217-3310.

DIAMONDBACK MOUNTAIN BIKE.

Like new. \$100. 413-4015.

COLLECTIBLE SPORTS, SCI-FI

CARDS: Baseball, football from mid 80's to 90's. Star Trek and Star Wars collectible cards too. Individual heroes, team sets or the whole collection. Call Stephen at 567-7921.

YOUR FREE AD HERE

The deadline for submitting Trader Ads is noon Wednesday, for the upcoming Friday's newspaper.

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 repre-

sent 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 830-6213.

HQBN, from A3

builds morale.”

The training day started for the Marines at 5 a.m. with a mile hike from the armory to Range 101. The quick pace and the extra weight of the gear was a welcome reminder to the Marines that “every Marine is a rifleman.”

The opportunity was a change of pace for the Marines from their daily combat support jobs.

The Marines of HQBN, mainly of whom mainly work behind a desks, said they relished the chance to be around their rifles again.

“I like being with my weapon, cleaning it, interacting with it, and just doing Marine stuff,” said Lance Cpl. Maxony Jean, an administrative clerk at the Installation Personnel Administration Center.

After zeroing in their sights they hiked their way to the second objective, Range 103.

“I like the hiking, even though its been a while since I’ve hiked. It was a little challenging,” Jean



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

Headquarters Battalion Marines take some quick pointers from 1st Sgt. Nelson Hidalgo, the first sergeant for Company B, HQBN, before beginning a shooting competition Tuesday at the Combat Center’s Range 103.

admitted.

Upon their arrival at Range 103, they prepped themselves for a small shoot-

ing competition.

“We’re here doing a cohesion shoot and engaging targets in four relays,” said 1st Sgt.

Thomas Russi, the first sergeant for HQBN’s Company A. “It helps them get back to basic marksmanship skills and

builds unit cohesion.”

The Marines divided into their relays, which became their teams for the competition.

After a practice round, the Marines were feeling more comfortable with their weapons.

At the end of the competition, which tested the Marines marksmanship skills

using moving pop-up targets, the fourth relay came out victorious and owned the bragging rights of the day.

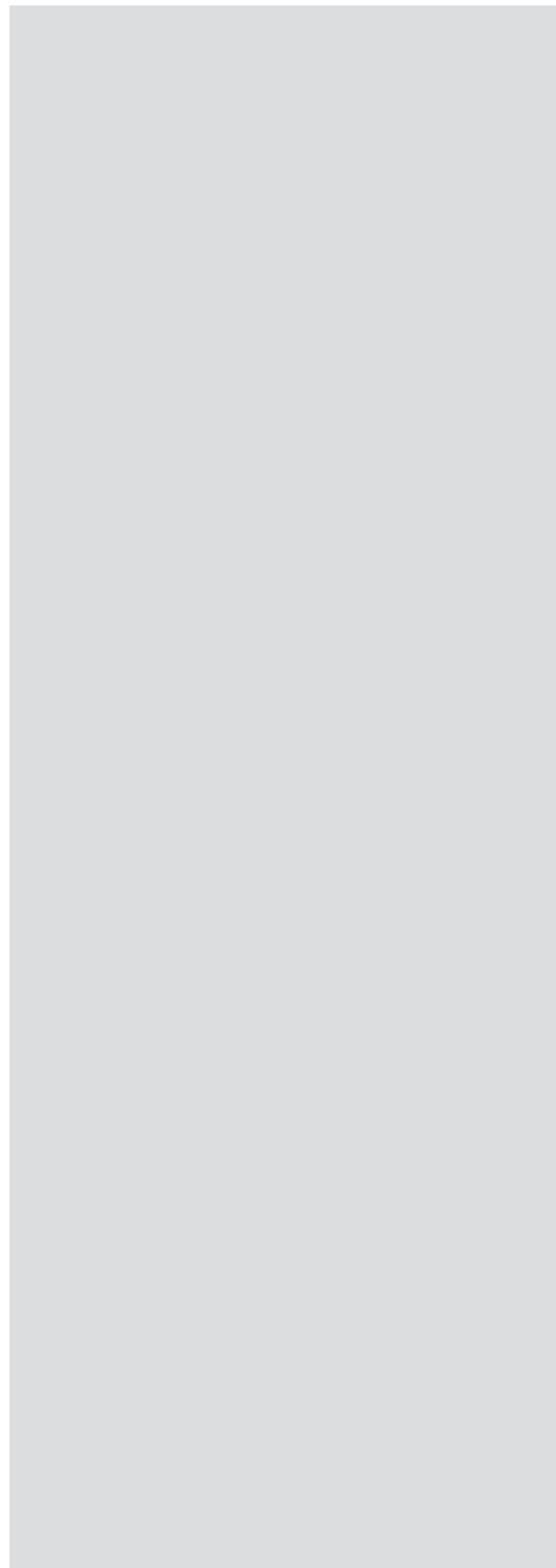
After a full day of hiking and shooting, the Marines returned to their sections with renewed spirits and appreciation for the rigors of daily life in a field training environment.



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

Marines weren’t the only ones working hard at the ranges Tuesday. A California Harvester Ant works to carry off a peanut left behind by Headquarters Battalion Marines after a cohesion shoot at Range 103 Tuesday.

ADVERTISEMENT





Bo Bice rocks Combat Center

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
 DIANE DURDEN**
 PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Combat Center personnel and their families swayed to the music of up-and-coming Southern rock and country music star Bo Bice during a free concert at Sunset Cinema, April 15.

Bice, whose father and younger brother were Marines, was excited and grateful to be playing for Marines and their families.

"The military has always been important [to me]. Without them, I wouldn't be able to say the things I want to say," Bice said, referring to the freedoms protected by the nation's military force.

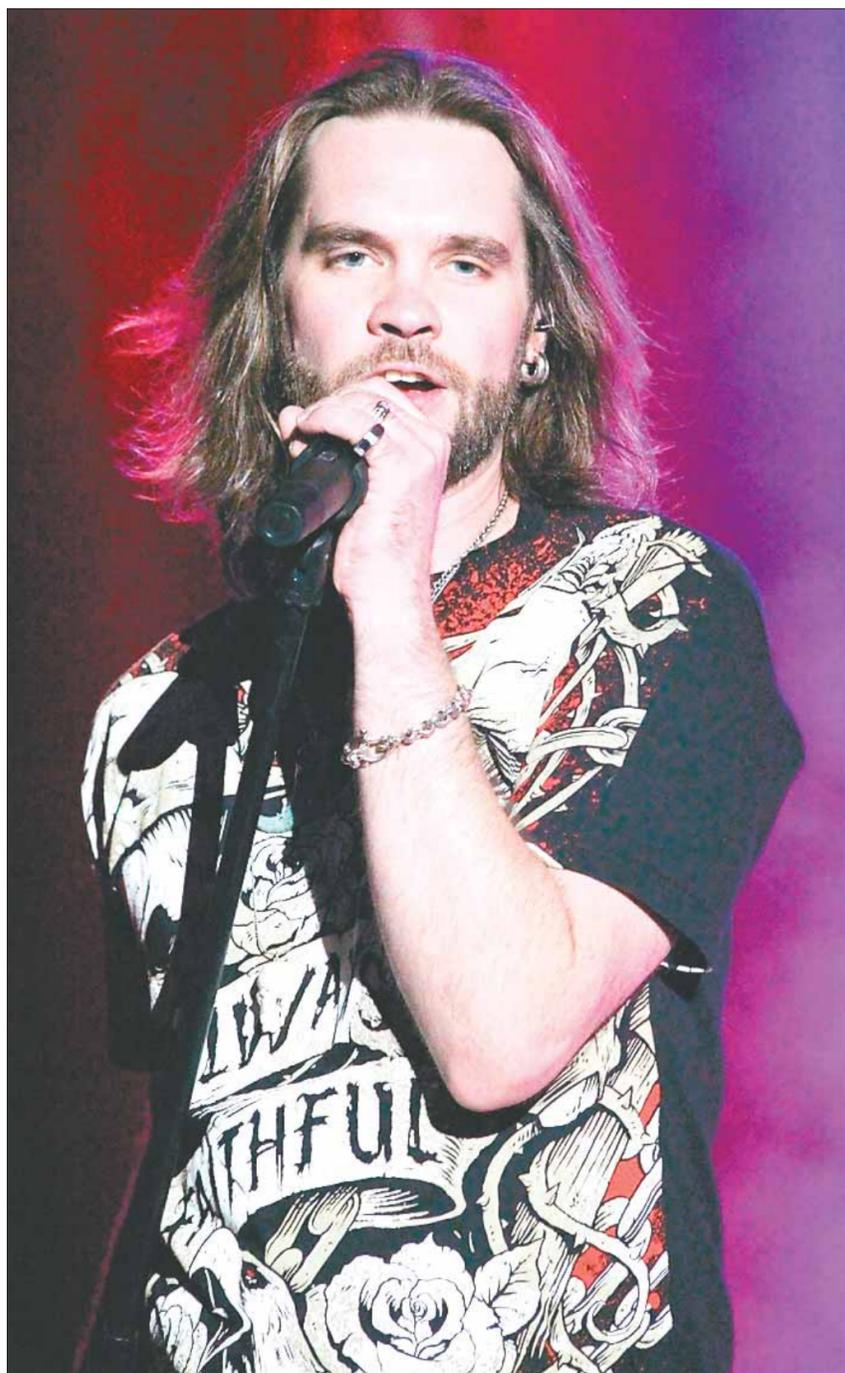
The night's performance included self-written songs about love of family and country.

"He's a real down-to-earth kind of guy," said Lance Cpl. Timothy Struble, a mail clerk with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

Between songs, Bice, who followed Carrie Underwood in second place on the fourth season of "American Idol," rang out his praise for the Marines and their families for their sacrifices.

"We're here to show the Marines, the men and women here, that we appreciate what they're doing," he emphasized.

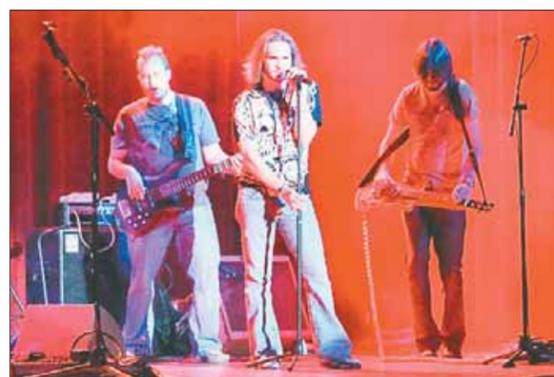
When Bice is not performing for audiences across the nation, he spends his time visiting wounded service members at Walter



Up-and-coming Southern rock and country music star Bo Bice performs for Combat Center personnel during a free concert at Sunset Cinema, April 15.



Bo Bice shares a high-five with an audience member after he performed for Combat Center personnel and their families during a free concert at Sunset Cinema April 15.



Bo Bice, former "American Idol" contestant, performs for Combat Center personnel and their families during a free concert at Sunset Cinema April 15.



Southern rock and country music star Bo Bice pauses for a photograph with Lance Cpl. Timothy Struble, mail clerk, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, after a free concert for Combat Center personnel at Sunset Cinema April 15.

See BO BICE, B4

Hitters head for home



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

A player with the Bandinis sprints to second base after sending the ball deep into the outfield during a Commanding General's Intramural Softball League game against the Hospital at the Combat Center's Felix Field Wednesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Dario Davis, a player with Bandinis, reaches first base moments before the first baseman secures the ball during a Commanding Generals Intramural Softball League game against Hospital at Felix Field Wednesday.

Spiking the punch

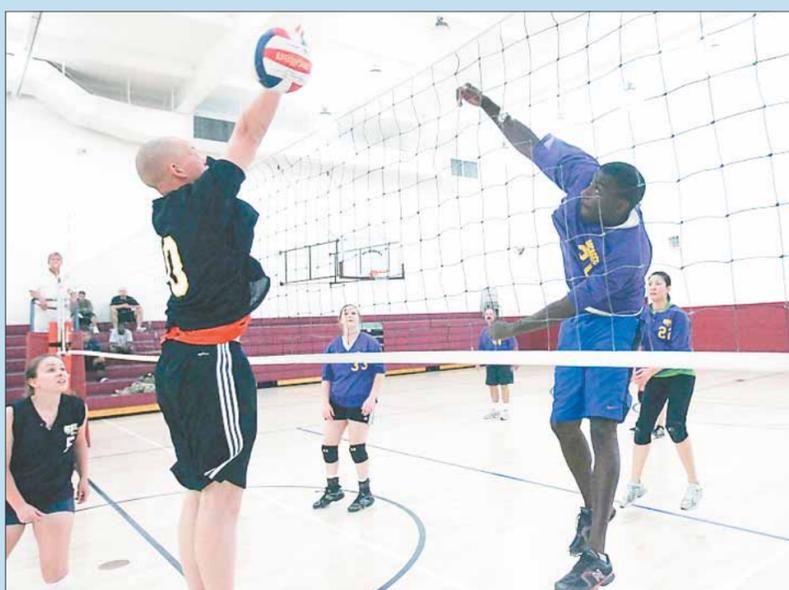
Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League standings

Team	Wins	Losses
Misfits	5	0
3rd CEB	4	0
Tatitlek	3	2
East Gym	3	1
Tanks BAS	2	2
Paper Cutz	1	3
TMO	1	3
MCCES	1	4
Vital Signs	0	5



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Michael Jeffery, a player with MCCES, volleys the ball over the front players of East Gym during a Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League game Tuesday. MCCES put up a valiant effort but was defeated twice.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Vincent Bullin, a player with East Gym, spikes the ball past a MCCES player in the Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League game Tuesday. East Gym defeated MCCES winning both games by at least eight points.



Liberty Call

Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Friday: Social Hour with food, 5 to 7 p.m.
DJ Gjettblaque, 8 to 11 p.m., Ladies Night
Saturdays: Variety Night with DJ Gjettblaque 8 to 11 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Fridays: Social Hour with food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Monday: Free Gourmet Bar Food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Free gourmet bar food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 7 to 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Fridays: Dinner, full menu, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Social Hour, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., DJ, 5 to 11 p.m.
Mondays: Steak night, full dinner menu, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-Hands lunch, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 5 to 7 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday-Friday: Lunch served, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Monday: Steak Night, 5 to 8 p.m.
Thursdays: Taco Night, 5 to 7 p.m.
Sunday: Easter Brunch, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

For complete calendars visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>.

Local Events

Pappy and Harriet's Weekend Line-Up:

The Clairmont Voodoo Society

Description: Americana/blues/rock sounds
When: 7:30 p.m., Friday, April 22

The Far West

Description: The solid country band performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, April 23
Where: 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information, call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Willie Boy's Weekend Line-Up:

Voodoo Hustlers

Description: The honky tonk/rock band performs
When: 7 p.m., Friday, April 22

California Celts

Description: A blend of traditional Celtic music with more modern rock and reggae sounds.
When: 9 p.m., Saturday, April 23
Where: Willie Boys Saloon and Dance Hall, 50048 Twentynine Palms Highway, Morongo Valley
For more information, call 363-3343 or visit <http://www.willieboys.com>.

Bob and Alison Garcia

Description: Acoustic folk guitar and vocals
When: 7 p.m., Friday, April 22
Where: 29 Palms Inn
73950 Inn Avenue, Twentynine Palms
For more information call 367-3505 or visit <http://www.29palmsinn.com>.

Lower Desert

Leann Rimes

Description: The country queen performs her hits
When: 9 p.m., Friday, April 29
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>.

The Moody Blues

Description: The classic rock band performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, May 14
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Earth, Wind and Fire

Description: The famous '60s R & B funk band performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, May 28
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

The Doobie Brothers

Description: The famous classic rock band performs
When: 6:45 p.m., Saturday, June 18
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, April 22

6 p.m. – Rango, Rated PG
9 p.m. – Beastly, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Hall Pass, Rated R

Saturday, April 23

11 a.m. – **Free Matinee.** Megamind, Rated PG
2 p.m. – Mars Needs Moms, Rated PG
6 p.m. – Big Mamma's House 3, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – The Adjustment Bureau, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Take Me Home Tonight, Rated R

Sunday, April 24

2 p.m. – Rango, Rated PG
6 p.m. – Red Riding Hood, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Battle: Los Angeles, Rated PG-13

Monday, April 25

7 p.m. – Beastly, Rated PG-13

Tuesday, April 26

7 p.m. – The Adjustment Bureau, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, April 27

7 p.m. – Big Mamma's House 3, Rated PG-13

Thursday, April 28

7 p.m. – Hall Pass, Rated R

Russell Brand reprises spoiled millionaire

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"Arthur"

Starring Russell Brand, Helen Mirren and Jennifer Garner
Rated PG-13

Money can buy a lot of things, but love isn't one of them.

As changeless and timeless as that pearl of wisdom appears to be, Hollywood nonetheless keeps returning to it, polishing it over and over, giving it a new shine for a new audience.

In "Arthur," British bad-boy comedian Russell Brand plays an eccentric, rich New York bachelor faced with tough marching orders: Get married to a social-climbing shrew he doesn't love, or kiss his nearly billion-dollar inheritance bye-bye.

As the irresponsible, spoiled, boozehound Arthur Bach; Brand steps into the role made famous by another British actor, Dudley Moore, in the original "Arthur" back in 1981. Jennifer Garner, a usually likeable actress, is tasked with the thankless role of Susan, the altogether unlikeable upper-crust bride-in-waiting who has her matrimonial sights locked on Arthur's sizeable nest egg.

Helen Mirren is Hobson, Arthur's no-nonsense British nanny, doing her best to make sure his immature antics doesn't upset his stern



COURTESY PHOTO

In "Arthur," British bad-boy comedian, Russell Brand, plays an eccentric, rich bachelor faced a tough choice. He must either get married to a social-climbing shrew he doesn't love, or kiss his inheritance good-bye.

mother, who'll do whatever it takes – including disenfranchising her only son – to protect the rigid corporate image of the family's financial empire.

Great Gerwig plays Naomi, the waifish commoner who captures Arthur's heart, jeopardizing his fortune and his future. And Nick Nolte is perfectly cast as Susan's gruff real-estate mogul father, an intimidating mountain of a man who makes it perfectly, painfully clear what will happen to Arthur if he doesn't walk down the aisle with his daughter.

Other than Hobson now being a woman, (Sir John Gielgud was nominat-

ed for a supporting-role Oscar for his portrayal of the long-suffering butler in the original), the plot is basically a carbon copy of the 1981 version, only considerably bawdier and with more crude humor than clever charm.

Dudley Moore's Arthur may have been a stumbling, word-slurring drunk, but at least you really felt for him and wanted him to soar above his circumstances. Brand, whose brash, hedonistic, say-anything style was well suited to the roles he played in "Saving Sarah Marshall" and "Get Him To The Greek," never connects here to the deeper emotions the movie wants us to feel as

Arthur tries to mend his party-hearty ways, give up the bottle, react to another character's health crisis and ultimately make a choice that will change his life forever, one way or another.

You'll laugh; Brand's a funny guy. But he has real trouble when he tries to spread his dramatic wings into any moment that doesn't land a punch line. His randy brand of humor seems like something best served as seasoning, not a full course.

At just under two hours, this "Arthur" is a comedic endurance test, a relentless pummeling that feels like an assault with someone else's funny bone.



COURTESY PHOTO

An interesting twist in the new remake was to change British no-nonsense butler Hobson, originally portrayed by Sir John Gielgud, into a British no-nonsense nanny played by Helen Mirren.



COURTESY PHOTO

As the irresponsible, spoiled boozehound Arthur Bach, played by Russell Brand, steps into the role made famous by another British actor, Dudley Moore, in the original "Arthur" back in 1981. Arthur tries to mend his party-hearty ways, give up the bottle, react to another character's health crisis and ultimately make a choice that will change his life forever.

Combat Center Leisure

Desert Detours: The 25th Annual Fallbrook Avocado Festival



Welcome to "Desert Detours," a series that follows correspondent Cpl. M.C. Nerl around on his explorations of the high desert, the basin and the valley. The "out-of-five" palm tree rating scale offers a glance at how worthwhile the writer considers a place to be. Locales will be judged on their accessibility, atmosphere, fun, cost and facilities. Keep an eye out every week for new shenanigans and hot tips on cool things to do.

CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

FALLBROOK, Calif. — For those new to the Combat Center who may not know what avocados are, let me begin by saying there have been very heated debates on whether it is a fruit or vegetable. The point is it is a delicious substance that typically winds up as guacamole.

The 25th annual Fallbrook Avocado Festival is a celebration centered around Fallbrook, Calif.'s, main agricultural staple, as well as their local culture.

Fallbrook is closer to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and no, it's not in the desert. But whatever, it was worth checking out and close enough for a weekend excursion.

After the long drive "down the hill," you begin to feel the air cooling and the actual oxygen getting thicker, which I might add, is very refreshing. The people of Fallbrook are all very nice and casual. The town itself has a very "small town" feel, and it's an excellent place to visit.

The main street of the already-small town was simply choked with people, vendors and entertainers. Sadly, I was the designated driver, so I could not partake in a good chunk of the fun. Nevertheless, responsibility is always fulfilling, too.

Guacamole was really the event's main attraction, overshadowing every other attraction. Seriously, I was hungry at first, but oh my God, I'm good on gua-

camole for a while.

There was obviously a "best guacamole," and a "largest avocado," competition, but seriously I only saw two avocado competitors, and neither was very large. Honestly, I wasn't exactly impressed. Maybe I should have investigated further.

Aside from a lot of food, there were ample performances by live bands, ranging in style from ska and punk to reggae, Mariachi and even Celtic influences. The music was pretty good, the beer was out of reach and the performers were definitely worth watching, especially since coming from the Midwest, I have never seen very many mariachi bands or authentic Hispanic performances. Pretty cool though. I honestly give that ONE PART four out of five palm trees, but the festival as a whole was a letdown.

The annual festival may be more fun for those with kids, by I don't have my own family to enjoy the "kid-gear," part of the event, so I couldn't say.

Overall, mostly due to the fact that I saw more guacamole and lemonade stands than I'd ever care to, I'm giving the festival a very disappointed 2 1/2 out of 5 palm trees.

Editor's Note: "Desert Detours" is a weekly series exploring opportunities for Marines and sailors from a firsthand perspective. All material included therein is the opinion of the writer and does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Marine Corps or the Department of Defense.



Fallbrook, Calif., celebrated their 25th annual Avocado Festival Saturday, with a wide variety of performers and other attractions, including a colorful troop of Ballet de Folklorico dancers.



The 25th annual Fallbrook, Calif., Avocado Festival included not just the green goodies the town is known for, but a wide variety of performers. The acts spanned multiple cultures, styles of music and dance.



Taste testers enjoy some of the many entries in a best guacamole competition Saturday at the Fallbrook, Calif., 25th annual Avocado Festival. In addition to the best guacamole, there were also largest avocado competitions, and many performers and independent vendors lining the streets.



Avocado wind chimes — these bad boys look awesome, but cost a bit too much for me to have enjoyed. Regardless, there are many different avocado-shaped and green-colored things to marvel at during the annual Fallbrook, Calif., Avocado Festival.



Fallbrook, Calif., celebrated its 25th annual Avocado Festival Saturday with a wide variety of performers and other attractions. The festival also had a simply obscene amount of guacamole for sampling.

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BO BICE, from B1

Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C., and the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., in support of the Wounded Warrior Project.

After the last song was sung, concert goers lined the stage for the opportunity to meet Bice and get an autograph and photograph with the humble singer.

"It was the best concert I've ever seen on base," said Ashley Kuhner, wife of Sgt. Joshua Kuhner, stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp

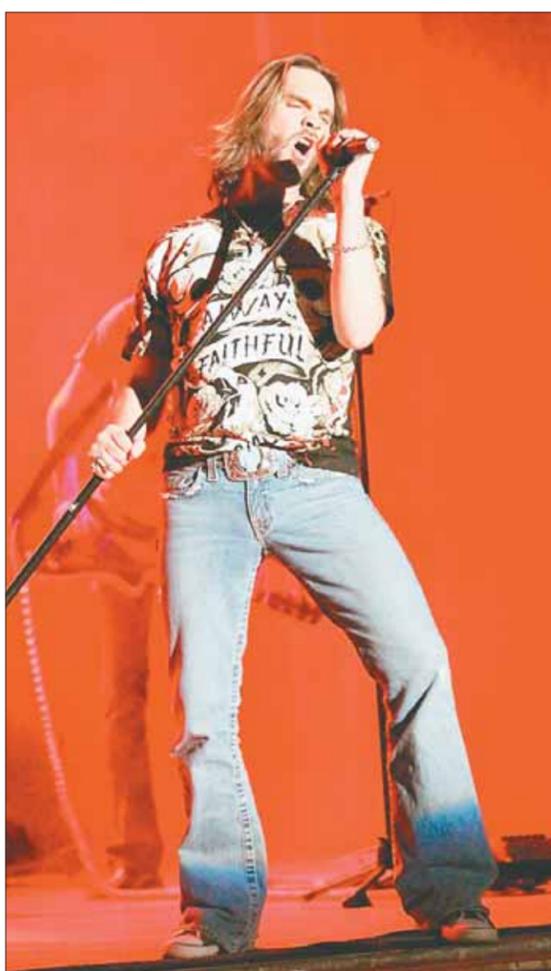
Pendleton, Calif. Ashley was one of hundreds who waited for an autograph.

Bice's appreciation for the work and sacrifices of the Marines and their families was a common thread throughout the entire night, and one he continued to express, even as his time aboard the Combat Center came to a close.

"I wouldn't have the freedom to take my kids out to do what they love to do," Bice said. "That's what America is about. If it's not for the military, we wouldn't have that."



Five-year-old Dominic Hernandez, son of Sgt. Matthew Okeefe, an instructor with Marine Corps Communication- Electronics School, shows off an autographed drumstick signed by Bo Bice and all the members of the band April 15.



DIANE DURDEN

Southern rock and country music star Bo Bice performs for Combat Center personnel during a free concert at Sunset Cinema April 15. Bice performed songs he wrote about themes Marines can relate to, like love and family.

Athlete of the Week



Name: Cory Stevenson
Hometown: Chandler, Ariz.
Unit: Installation Personnel Administration Center
Recognition: The Most Valuable Player for the IPAC Commanding General's Intramural Softball League team.
Favorite aspect of the sport: "Coming out here and playing with the team."
Advice for aspiring players: "Keep on practicing. Don't give up because you make one error."