



June 8, 2012

Vol. 56 Issue 19

Summer fun done safely

Terri Moon Cronk
 American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 22, 2012 – As summer approaches, Defense Department officials want military members and civilian employees to think about safety during their recreational pursuits, said Joseph J. Angello Jr., the department's director of operational readiness and safety.

Whether taking a road trip, swimming, or riding a motorcycle, Angello wants service members, their family members and DOD civilians to be aware of risks associated with such activities.

Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta "wants everyone to be safe," Angello pointed out.

Highway fatalities, particularly from motorcycle accidents, make up the majority of summertime deaths, he said. However, he added, recent trends indicate that the num-

"You've got responsibilities in life to those you love, and to this nation ... to defend it for your family and for yourself."

— Joseph J. Angello Jr.

ber of summer fatalities is decreasing. For example, last summer's 92 deaths between Memorial Day and Labor Day was less than the 124 summertime fatalities in 2008.

Fatal summertime accidents are a tragedy, not only for the deceased but also for "their families, friends, and their units," Angello said.

Other major risks, he said, include driving when tired or distracted. Driving demands concentration and people need to drive defensively and undistracted, he added.

"During the summer, people are [changing duty stations], traveling, seeing family, taking vacations," Angello said. "These are supposed to be good times and relaxing. But there are risks on the road."

Most driving precautions are based on common sense, he said, such as always using

See **SUMMER**, page A6



CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Tankers Return

Marines come home from NATO Training Mission Afghanistan

Cpl. Sarah Dietz
 Combat Correspondent

Marines and sailors from Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, were welcomed home Saturday by hundreds of excited family members and friends from their recent seven-month deployment to Afghanistan.

The company marched into the 1st Tanks compound into the eager waiting arms of loved ones. For some of the Marines, the homecoming event was also the first time meeting their infant children, who were born during their time away.

The battalion's mission overseas, the NATO Training Mission, Afghanistan, was a mission of mentorship.

The tankers dismounted their metal

monsters and proceeded on foot to advise and mentor Afghan National Army soldiers and Afghan National Police officers on their role in their community and how to take proper actions in dangerous situations.

The battalion traveled throughout Afghanistan, reaching many different types of people.

"It was a different experience," said Cpl. Carlos Iruegas, MRAP all-terrain vehicle driver, 1st Tanks. "We saw all of Afghanistan. The North was different than the South, they had hope in their eyes, hope in change."

While transitioning from a tank mission to an advisor role, the trip was dubbed an extremely successful deployment,

See **TANKS**, page A7



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

[Top] A crowd gathers to see Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, come home Tuesday. The company is returning home from Afghanistan.

[Center] Loved ones embrace their Marines from Company B, 1st Tanks, who returned home from Afghanistan Tuesday.

3/11 returns from sea

Sgt. Heather Golden
 Combat Correspondent

When Cpl. Don Robinson left to join the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit with the rest of Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, in November, his daughter Samira was a tiny 2-month-old.

On Monday, six months later, Robinson and the other 113 Marines who left with the Okinawa-based MEU, stepped off the long-awaited buses onto Del Valle Field to happy, tearful reunions with the families and friends they left behind.

For some, it was like they



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Cpl. Don Robinson, artilleryman, Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, reconnects with his 8-month-old daughter, Samira, Monday during 3/11's homecoming celebration.

never left. For others, like Robinson, coming home meant adjusting to what's changed.

"It's amazing," Robinson said about how much his now 8-month-old daughter has grown. "We Skyped, but that not the same thing."

While deployed with the MEU, the battery provided artillery support for the infantrymen of Battalion Landing Team

See **3/11**, page A7

MCMWTC changes hands

Capt. Nick Mannweiler
 Public Affairs Officer

MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER, BRIDGEPORT, Calif. - The Marines, sailors and families of the Mountain Warfare Training Center near Bridgeport, Calif., welcomed their new commander and wished their previous leader well following the change of command ceremony here, Tuesday.

Col. Phillip W. Chandler transferred authority of the training center to Lt. Col. John J. Carroll after two years of leadership through periods of development as well as during one of the center's darkest hours.

Under his guidance, Chandler charted a course change from the last decade of combat operations back to the technical skills needed at the root of the

center's mission, fighting and winning the nation's battles in alpine environments. Instructors trained extensively in skiing, assault climbing, mule handling and orienteering in order to challenge and guide their students. Each year of his command, more than 25,000 Marines, sailors and joint and allied partners trained in Bridgeport.

"The Commandant's number one priority is to provide the best trained and equipped Marines into combat. That's what we're doing here. We are contributing directly to what our Marine Corps does – go out and fight and win the nation's battles," Chandler said. "Outside of combat, I don't know that you can find a more mentally and physically challenging envi-

See **MCMWTC** page A7



Col. Phillip W. Chandler hands the MWTC colors to Lt. Col. John J. Carroll, symbolizing the transfer of command of Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Tues.

'Warriors' take desert skies

■ HMLA-167 train with new UH-1Y 'Yankee' in EMV



CPL. WILLIAM J. JACKSON

Lance Cpl. Michael Morris, crew chief, with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 167, leans out of a UH-1Y Huey to help guide the pilots safely into the landing zone Tuesday.

Cpl. Sarah Dietz
 Combat Correspondent

Marines with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 167 out of Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., conducted an aerial training mission Tuesday using their new UH-1Y Huey helicopters above the Combat Center training area.

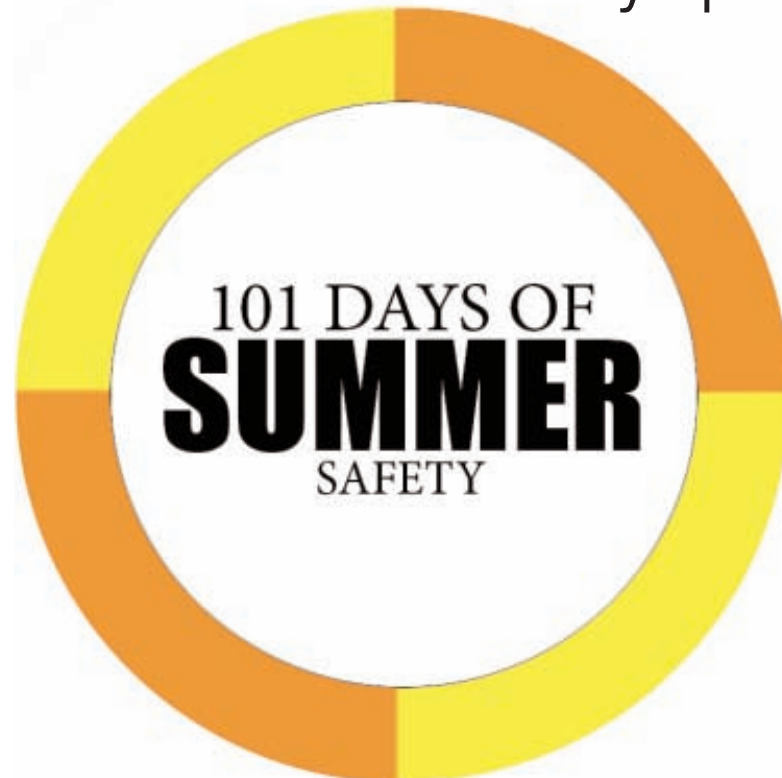
The mission was to transport Marines from 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, located at Cleghorn Pass, and bring them to reinforce troops at the Lava and Lead Mountain areas in preparation for a simulated large scale attack from notional enemy forces in the north.

Later, the Marines transported infantrymen from 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, for a similar situation.

This exercise was just one of many the squadron has conducted in during their time at the Combat Center. HMLA-

See **HMLA**, page A7

Check out water safety tips



Featured on page B6

This Week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post dated June 9, 1959, Vol. 3, No. 23

29 Palms units return, Landing exercises over

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Late last week personnel of Force Troops returned to the Base after having participated in operation TWIN PEAKS. The operation was a combined Navy-Marine Corps amphibious exercise held at Camp Pendleton. The exercise's landing had been made by the First Marine Expeditionary Force on Thursday, May 28, and the invasion against "aggressor-held" territory had continued until Friday, June 5.

Organizations from 29 Palms included the First Field Artillery Group, the First Anti-Aircraft Group, Detachment 1st Force Service Regiment and selected personnel from other units.

The mission of the desert men was to provide general support for the landing force.

USS Princeton

Along with the participation of Force Troops the exercise was highlighted by many "firsts" which provided military officials with invaluable information regarding the conduct of amphibious assault.

The U.S. Navy's newest amphibious assault ship, the USS Princeton (LPH-5), received her baptism May 28 when 1000 men of the 1st Marine Division and the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing were heli-lifted behind "enemy" lines during the initial phase of Twin Peaks. Previously the Princeton was an anti-submarine ship.

The Princeton is not the first naval vessel to be converted for the Marine Corps' new concept of "vertical concept." The USS Thetis Bay (CVHA-1) laid the groundwork and established much of the basic criteria for the concept.

Vertical envelopment is the Corps' doctrine of lifting combat troops from ships and landing them beyond the beaches or behind the enemy by use of helicopters.

A new casualty reporting system was also utilized by the expeditionary force. Providing the test for the new system was a mobile IBM data processing installation with "punch cards" on which all types of data relating to the individual man is recorded.

Combat landing forces require everything from tanks to band-aids, and these were only a small part of the supplies which rolled across the Navy's new 3x15 pontoon causeway on D-Day.

Developed by the U.S. Naval Civil Engineering Laboratory, Port Hueneme, Calif., to succeed the outdated 2x30 causeway, the 3x15 is a vital link in the ship-to-shore supply chain.

New Vehicles

A matched pair of vehicles, one of the newest and largest from the amphibious arsenal and the other a counterpart in the armored field, was unveiled during the exercise.

The vehicles, the Experimental Tracked Landing Vehicle and the Heavy Gun Tank, underwent initial test under simulated combat conditions during the May 28 assault.

The Utility Landing Vehicle, designated LVTUX-2 by the Marine Corps, but referred to as the "Beast" or "Monster" by the men who maintain it, and the giant tank were designed to work together and add power to a Marine amphibious landing. The LVTUX-2 will transport the tank from a Navy LSD through sea and surf condition to a dry landing beyond the high water mark.

Register and request your ballot for upcoming primaries

Voters from these States should visit FVAP.gov to register and request their absentee ballot for the July, August, and September 2012 Presidential Preference Primary (P) and State Primary (S) elections listed below:

- North Carolina: July 17 (Primary Runoff)
- Georgia: July 31 (S)
- Texas: July 31 (Primary Runoff)
- August Primaries: (60-Day Notice)**
- Tennessee: August 2 (S)
- Kansas: August 7 (S)
- Michigan: August 7 (S)
- Missouri: August 7 (S)
- Washington: August 7 (S)
- Hawaii: August 11 (S)
- Connecticut: August 14 (S)
- Florida: August 14 (S)
- Minnesota: August 14 (S)
- Wisconsin: August 14 (S)

July Primaries (30-Day Notice): NOTE for July Primaries: If you have not received your requested State ballot, submit the backup Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot at FVAP.gov (see FWAB information below).

- Georgia: August 21 (Primary Runoff)
- Wyoming: August 21 (S)
- Alaska: August 28 (S)
- Arizona: August 28 (S)
- Oklahoma: August 28 (Primary Runoff)
- Vermont: August 28 (S)
- September: (90-Day Notice)**
- Guam: September 1 (S)
- Massachusetts: September 6 (S)
- Virgin Islands: September 8 (S)
- Delaware: September 11 (S)
- New Hampshire: September 11 (S)
- Rhode Island: September 11 (S)
- Wisconsin: September 11 (S)

It may not be too late to participate in the July primaries. View the Primary Election Calendar at FVAP.gov for more information.

Go to FVAP.gov and get started! It only takes a few minutes! All members of the U.S. Uniformed Services, their family members, and citizens residing outside the U.S. who are residents from these States should submit an FPCA for these elections by going to FVAP.gov or by following the instructions in the Voting Assistance Guide, also available at FVAP.gov.

Be sure you include an email address, phone number, and/or fax number on your absentee ballot application in case your local election official needs to contact you. Remember, many States allow you to submit your form electronically, and deliver your ballot electronically, or provide online ballot access. Go to FVAP.gov

or your State's election website to see how you can return your form.

To find out the status of your registration/absentee ballot request, contact your local election office, or visit your State website.

Vote the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) The FWAB is a backup ballot. If 30 days before the election (or longer based on your geographic location) you think you will not receive your State ballot in time to vote and return it (especially in July Primary States), vote the FWAB at FVAP.gov. The FWAB is also available in embassies and consulates and military installations around the world.

Additional information Check your State's election website for specific information on candidates, elections, contact information, and links to your local election offices. Find your State's website at FVAP's web portal.

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OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

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

Local off-limits guidance prohibits service members from patronizing the following locations.

In Oceanside:

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

In San Diego:

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

In National City:

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

In Twentynine Palms:

- Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
- K Smoke Shopp, 5865A Adobe Rd.

In Yucca Valley:

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

In Palm Springs:

- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

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

HOT TOPIC

SUMMER IS HERE EVENT

Religious Ministries and the G-5 are hosting the "Summer's Here Event" on June 14 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. This event targets families by providing information about summer programs and events both on and off base. This event is free and open to all Combat Center families. There will be information for all ages with the Country Workforce Developer and employers available to talk to teens interested in summer jobs.

SUDOKU #2557-D

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PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

PROCRASTINATORS

See answers on page A3

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ACROSS

1. Arrest, slangily
5. Nay sayer
9. Jordan's capital
14. Zion National Park state
15. Like good pastrami
16. Note from the boss
17. Reason for a procrastinator to shave?
20. Low-?budget prefix
21. Front end of a bray
22. "Guarding ___" (1994 movie)
23. China's longest river
26. Ho-?hum
28. Senate spots
30. Natural talents
34. Mil. address
37. Vincent Lopez's theme song
39. Stan's slapstick partner
40. Comedy show for procrastinators?
44. Political influence
45. Mushroom part
46. "Omigosh!"
47. Greek messenger to the gods
49. Sound from the bull pen
52. Early VCR format
54. Like pre-?1917 Russia
58. Smooth-?tongued
61. City area, informally
63. Seaweed-?wrapped fare
64. Pre-?2001 World Series, to a procrastinator?
68. Fred's dancing sister
69. Rex's sleuth
70. Istanbul inhabitant
71. Inventor Nikola
72. Playing hooky, to a GI
73. Wimbledon units

DOWN

1. Gary of "The Buddy Holly Story"
2. Erie Canal city
3. WASP part
4. Summer footwear
5. The whole schmear
6. Prefix with classic or natal
7. Dashboard gauge, briefly
8. Readied, as a printing press
9. Blond shade
10. Trattoria spheroid
11. Iranian of old
12. Author Oz
13. Anchor's concern
18. Sheep shelter
19. Feudal drudge
24. Off-?the-?wall
25. Some jackets or collars
27. Zillions
29. Gill openings
31. "Would ___ to you?"
32. Tear apart
33. Be "it," in a game
34. Yiddish author Sholem
35. Act the crybaby
36. ___ close to schedule
38. Powers or Smart
41. Ignoramus
42. To ___ (perfectly)
43. Managed care gps.
48. Bit of theater litter
50. Tabula ___ (clean slate)
51. Has confidence in
53. Skybox locale
55. One Time?
56. Gambler's loss, figuratively
57. Watch sounds
58. Pesky flier
59. Prospector's strike
60. Oscar winner Burl
62. Witch's concoction
65. "Peel ___ grape"
66. ___-?Magnon
67. Cyber-?guffaw

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

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE AMERICAN FLAG

Old Glory

National Ensign,
Philadelphia, Pa., 236 years old

INTERVIEWED BY
SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN
June 3, 2012

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
CPL. SARAH DIETZ
Feb. 21, 2011

> **I am not just a piece** of brightly colored cloth, or a decoration for your porch. I am much more than that. I am a symbol of something great.

> **"Old Glory," I am called.** But my glory?...

> **My glory lies in those** hearts that yearn for freedom. Freedom to love and to laugh. And most importantly, to live.

> **I was there when** my country was born. She was then a small orphan, with nothing but wilderness at her back, and too few neighbors she could call friends.

> **I watched as we** survived and grew strong.

> **I have been there.** Everywhere America's warriors have been, I've been right there alongside them in the fight. Through all the trials we've had, my colors have never faded. Even in our nation's darkest hours, when the sun rises, I'm still there urging my countrymen to soldier on.

> **I never forget those who died** for me. My memory is bright with the stories of those heroes whose lives, though sometimes cut too short, championed America.

> **I guess you could call me** one of the first true Americans.

> **I am considered a living symbol** of the U.S., even though I don't breathe or eat or sleep. American pride and ideals are what give me life. A million lives, or more, even, were willingly given to grant me my voice.

> **With that voice, I called out** to the world, "Come to my shores, all who are tired, poor, oppressed, and yearning to breathe freely. Come and I will be your guarantee of liberty."

> **I didn't look like this at first** after we claimed our independence. On New Year's Day 1776, George Washington had the Grand Union flag hoisted over his base at Prospect Hill outside the siege of Boston. There were 13 red and white alternating stripes, and the British Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner.

> **Betsy Ross sewed the first** of my kind in May 1776. But I wasn't an official symbol of our nation until 1777 when Congress passed the first Flag Act. I was to have 13 stripes of red and white, and 13 stars.

> **They said my original 13** stars were to represent "a new constellation."

> **As America grew, so did I.** I changed my look more than once. My shape and design changed five times between 1777 and 1960. My proportions changed, the number of stripes and stars changed. Even how the stars are placed on their field of blue changed. What never changed is what I represent.

> **Today, and since 1960,** I have 13 horizontal stripes, seven red and six white. These are for the original 13 colonies. I have 50 stars, one each for every state in the Union.

> **Even my colors are symbolic, and not simply** just leftover from the familiarity of the Union Jack flown during British rule. Red is for hardiness and valor. White is for purity and innocence. Blue is for vigilance, perseverance and justice.

> **I never really retire.** You can actually fly any of my predecessors. According to the Flag Code, any official American flag, even if it is a former official one, is still an active and living symbol of this country.

> **If I get dirty,** a little mild soap and light hand washing is all I need to be fit to fly again.

> **Contrary to popular belief,** if I accidentally touch the ground, you are not duty-bound to destroy me. Just immediately fix the situation and move on. I'm willing to forgive and forget.

> **Did you know you don't have to be a veteran** to have me draped on your coffin? The Flag Code doesn't specifically prohibit anyone from having this honor, although it is more commonly reserved for service members.

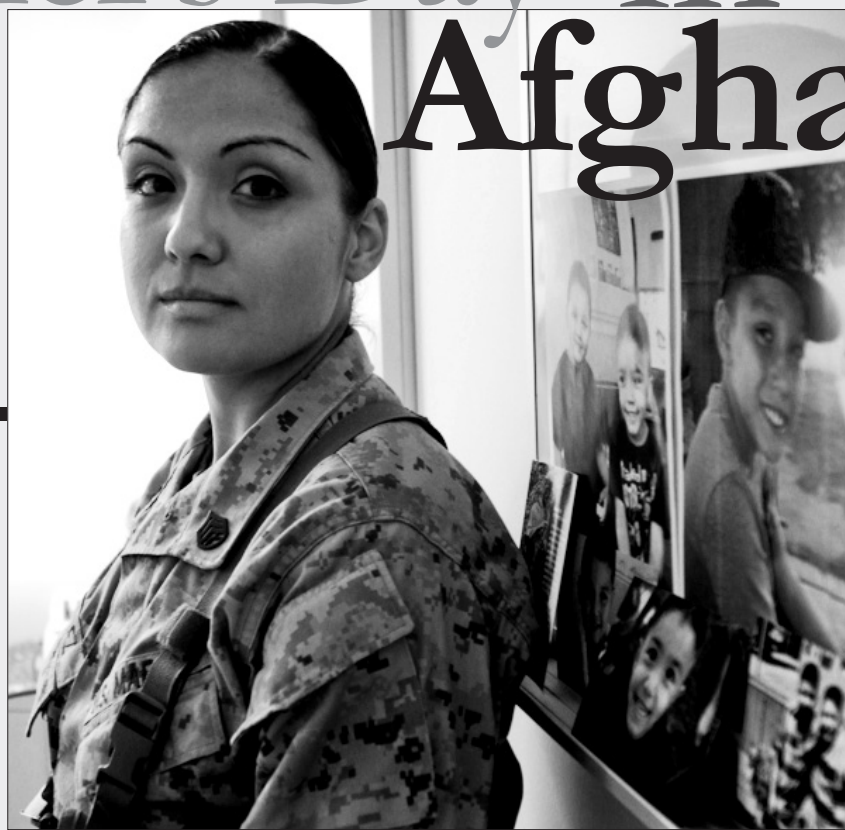
> **When the day comes** that I am too worn or tattered, beyond repair, and I can no longer properly represent America, I need to be disposed of in a dignified manner, like ceremonial burning.

> **First my stripes are separated.** Red burned, then white. Then go my stars, one by one. It may seem odd, but that's my tradition.



A Mother's Day in Afghanistan

Story and photo by
Cpl. Timothy Lenzo
 1st Marine Division



Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Maribel Valdez, the adjutant with the 1st Marine Division (Forward) at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, poses with photos of her five children, May 15. Valdez, who deployed to Afghanistan in January, tries to communicate with her family every day.

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan—Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Maribel Valdez, adjutant, 1st Marine Division (Forward), sits quietly at her desk. She sits straight with dark eyes, her M-9 pistol holstered tight against her uniform, and pictures of her family on the board behind her, showcasing the two different lives she lives.

She's a mother and a Marine. It's a balancing act that's more difficult since she deployed to Afghanistan in January. She's thousands of miles from her children, having traded the sunny Southern California lifestyle for the heat and dust of Afghanistan.

"It's very hard, I'm not going to say it's easy," Valdez said. "I think it's harder being a mom, it's hard to know that a big part of your life is not here with you."

A large part of her life is at her home in Temecula. Valdez has five children: Breanna, 12; Jose, 10; Issac, 9; Jason, 5; and Jacob, 4. Valdez said it's hard for her younger children to understand why she can't be home.

"No matter how you tell them you are working, they don't understand," Valdez said. "To them, it's 'Mommy's gone' or 'Mommy left me.'"

Valdez prepared her family as best she could before she deployed. She told them why she had to leave and how her job as an adjutant helps Marines.

"I explained to my [children] that my purpose was to make sure that everyone that was doing great things was being recognized for it," Valdez said.

Mother's Day on May 13 came and went much like any other day for Valdez, with the exception of a few

well wishes via email. She woke up and went to work like she does every Sunday.

"Mother's Day was just a typical day until night when I got to talk to [the kids]," Valdez said.

Afghanistan is 12 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Temecula, so when Valdez called her family, Mother's Day was almost over. It was bittersweet for Valdez. Her children wished her a Happy Mother's Day, but also expressed how much they missed her and wished she was home.

"It was heartbreaking because it was the first time my [children] said 'Mom you left me' or 'I'm lonely,'" Valdez said. "It's hard to comfort them over the phone, knowing I can't hug them to make them feel better."

The pain of not being able to be there for her children is difficult for Valdez, a proud Marine and even prouder parent.

"When they hurt, you hurt, when they're happy, you're happy," she explained.

When Valdez married her husband Jose, a former Marine, he had three children from a previous marriage, forcing her to learn quickly how to be a mother.

"It was like instant family when I got married -- just add water, and all of a sudden you have children," Valdez explained.

Valdez said being a mother was difficult and stressful, but it has made her a better person and a better Marine. She wouldn't change it for the world.

Valdez said she'd balanced being a mother and taking care of her junior Marines by taking the lessons

learned from motherhood and applying them to her military career.

"I commonly refer to her as 'Momma Valdez' because she's like the 'Mom' of the office," said Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Andre Smith, the division's adjutant chief. "Momma" Valdez earned her nickname, Smith said, by being an understanding and caring staff noncommissioned officer.

She also has the ability to get her Marines' attention if they mess up, he said.

"Somebody does something wrong and she gives them an eye, like you know you messed up," Smith explained.

Valdez learned the look from having four boys and one pre-teen daughter in the house. She also learned to be more understanding when people make mistakes, a valuable lesson for any mom.

With Mother's Day fresh in her mind and a recent package delivered with a DVD, filled with music and photos of her family, Valdez can't help but think of what it'll be like when she returns home.

"I want to spend more time with them, do more of that family bonding," Valdez said. She plans to take her children to amusement parks, Washington, D.C., and national parks.

"There are certain things that I think my children need to experience -- like traveling," she said.

Valdez knows it's difficult for her family while she's deployed, and noted she will be happy to return home to them.

"The first thing I'm going to do, is hug them because I miss that feeling," Valdez said with a grin.

Week **IN** Photos

11th Marine Expeditionary Unit



CPL. RYAN CARPENTER



CPL. RYAN CARPENTER



CPL. RYAN CARPENTER



CPL. RYAN CARPENTER

[Top, left] Capt. Sung Kim speaks with Republic of Korea Marines visiting USS New Orleans and embarked members of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit June 2.

[Top, right] Grenadier Kwon Woo Kim, a Republic of Korea Marine, arrives aboard USS New Orleans June 1 during flight operations with the ship and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

[Bottom, right] Cpl. Matthew Shrader demonstrates speed reloading a rifle to Republic of Korea Marines visiting USS New Orleans and embarked members of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit during a weapons class June 3.

[Bottom, left] Republic of Korea Marines and embarked members of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit participate in a weapons class June 3.

Marines reach out

■ Combat Center Marines adopt Yucca Mesa Elementary

Photo and story by Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu



[Above] Cpl. Shawn Asencio, administrative clerk, Headquarters and Services Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, brings his "Orange Dinos" team in for some chants at Yucca Mesa Elementary School's field day June 1. Asencio and six other Marines volunteered at the school as part of the Combat Center's Adopt-a-School program.

It is just the start of the 101 days of summer and everyone is looking to stay safe but still have fun outside.

Marines from Combat Logistics Battalion 7 helped out at Yucca Mesa Elementary School as part of the Combat Center's Adopt-a-School program.

The six Marines volunteered their time at Yucca Mesa to help the school kids with their field day activities.

The Marines coached many of the teams in the kick-ball portion of the field day and manned different stations when the day shifted to water activities.

"I've never volunteered like this," said Cpl Shawn Asencio, administrative clerk, Headquarters and Services Company, CLB-7. "I didn't even know we adopted a school until someone asked me if I wanted to volunteer."

Asencio was one of the six enthusiastic Marines who led the kids through their activities and encouraged them to do their best.

"These kids are enthusiastic," Asencio said. "They're really pumped up and really love the competition."

The morning of kick-ball was fun. The afternoon turned into a scorcher, getting up to 106 degrees. That afternoon, the kids cooled off by playing water games.

For many of the Marines it was their first time interacting with young students and they did not know what to expect.

"They were just a lot more playful than I expected," said Cpl. Lucas Williams, optics technician, CLB-7.

The Adopt-a-School program is also a way for the Marines to interact with the local community.

"We get stuck at the base a lot. It's nice to get off base and see some of the local people," Williams said.

Along with helping the students of Yucca Mesa, the volunteers talked with teachers of the school as well. They answered questions about their jobs and about their time in the community.

"This is something I totally want to do again," said Asencio. "I would go back to my shop and tell the guys what a great time I had."

SUMMER, from A1

seat belts — even when driving on short trips — and wearing proper attire, including helmets and protective gear, when operating a motorcycle or an all-terrain vehicle.

Other summer safety basics include going swimming with a friend, and only when lifeguards are on duty, he said.

"Everyone should know how to swim," he said, adding that the military services had 13 swimming deaths last year.

But regardless of the summertime activity, using the buddy system is important, he said, especially to prevent drinking while driving.

"If we're watching out for each other and your buddy is

drinking, and he's [about to drive], take away his keys," Angello said. "We've got to remember that. He's your co-pilot, your battle buddy. You've got to take care of each other, plan, think ahead, and take responsibility."

At outings where alcohol is going to be served, Angello says to make a plan by choosing a designated driver or plan to take a cab ahead of time, and drink in moderation. And don't drink when driving, operating motorcycles or ATVs, jet skis or swimming where undertows exist, he said.

"Alcohol influences you, slows you down, your balance and your senses," Angello said. "Your perceptions are distorted, so be aware of it."

Using "the military mindset" to realize potential risks

in advance is critical to staying safe while participating in summertime activities, he said, noting some situations call for personal courage in the presence of peers when faced with risky situations.

"You've got to have the foresight to say, 'If I don't say no, I might not get the opportunity again [because] I might be dead,'" Angello said.

Making smart responsible decisions helps to prevent personal tragedy and grief to loved ones, he said.

"You've got responsibilities in life to those you love, and to this nation ... to defend it for your family and for yourself," Angello said. "The life you save is not just your own. There are people who love and depend on you."

TANKS, from A1

according to Maj. Jared Duff, executive officer, 1st Tanks.

“Working with the Army was different, their way of doing things was way different than the Marines,” Iruegas said.

“We had 10 teams doing different missions,” said Lt. Col. Timothy Barrick, commanding officer, 1st Tanks. “I’m proud of the Marines and the work they’ve been doing.”

Fellow tankers were among the families and friends waiting at the compound.

“I’m happy to have them back home,” said Cpl. Adam Semien, Headquarters and Services Co., 1st Tank Battalion. “They did good things out there. The least I can do is welcome them home.”

The crowd quickly dispersed minutes after the reunion. With the deployment behind them, family and friends were eager to spend quality time together.

“I’m so thankful he’s home,” said Natalie Meeks, wife of Staff Sgt. Michael Meeks, Co. B, 1st Tanks. “It’s nice having the man of the house back.”

3/11, from A1

1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, and was renamed the Non-Lethal Weapons Company while there. The BLT, along with the battery Marines, participated in exercise Cobra Gold 2012, which is hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand annually and incorporates the militaries of several allied nations for a spectrum of military operations, including field training exercises and humanitarian and civil assistance projects.

The BLT joined forces with Thai Marine and Army artillery units and supported American and Thai maneuver units.

“It was an excellent experience building our relationships with foreign militaries, specifically our allies,” said Capt. Dwight Bundy, com-

mander, Lima Battery, 3/11. “We learned from them just like they learned from us.”

The battery Marines later integrated with Republic of Korea Marines to support American and South Korean maneuver units during their training exercises together as well.

Meeting and working with Marines from another country’s military service was an experience Bundy said he and his Marines enjoyed the most, and one that they learned a surprising fact from.

“These Korean Marines are a tougher breed of any other foreign military I’ve seen,” he said.

With their missions completed, and all the Marines home, it is time to catch up on all they missed with families while they were away.

Lance Cpl. Steven Wible, artilleryman, Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, slips an engagement ring on Vanessa Lee’s hand after she accepted his proposal to marry him June 4, at the 3/11 homecoming event.



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

HMLA, from A1

167 has been conducting training missions constantly throughout the day and nighttime hours over the past few weeks as part of their Enhanced Mojave Viper exercise.

“Twenty-four hours a day for five weeks,” said Capt. Robbie Jorgensen, pilot, HMLA-167. “We train constantly. It simulates a combat environment.”

The squadron is taking advantage of the Combat Center training area not only to train for combat, but also to get a better feel for their newest helicopter, the Yankee, which

they received late last year.

The UH-1Y is an upgraded version of the original UH-1 “Huey,” which has been in use in the U.S. military since the Vietnam War. The Yankee has incorporated the safety features of its predecessor, for operating in extreme cold and hot climates. But, it has upgraded its aerospace technology, including airframe improvements and cockpit upgrades, making the helicopter faster and safer.

The squadron is not scheduled to deploy anytime in soon, but is preparing for Afghanistan while becoming experts with their Yankee helicopters.

MCMWTC, from A1

ronment than you have right here.”

Chandler and Carroll forged their team Feb. 3, when a sudden gas leak sparked an explosion at a housing unit in the Coleville, Calif., military housing area, killing a Marine’s wife and serious-

ly injuring two more people. During the next week, the two men supervised recovery operations in the neighborhood and ensured the care of their Marines and their families as they

began returning to the neighborhood following evacuations. Chandler cited it as the hardest moment in his career, but it tested and strengthened the tight-knit bonds between the MWTC families.

“I’m gonna miss it. I’m gonna miss working with these guys,” he said. “They always say ‘Thanks for allowing me to serve with you, sir.’ And I always say ‘You didn’t serve me, buddy.

We served together. This is a team.’ I’m truly going to miss all the folks around here. I just think it’s a great group of professionals and that’s probably the biggest thing I’m going to miss.”

Carroll has spent 20 of his 22 years of service in either the Fleet or in various elements of Training and Education Command, giving him

a strong foundation in leading and training Marines. Additionally, his time spent “up on the hill” at MWTC during six training exercises gives him the familiarity with and appreciation for the center’s unique mission.

“There’s no other place like this in the Marine Corps, no other place like this in DOD, let alone other countries. We do a damn good job of what we do,” Carroll said. “If you’ve got an infantry battalion and you want to get some hard, tough, mentally and physically challenging training that’s going to develop your small unit leaders, you need to come here.”

If you’ve got an infantry battalion and you want to get some tough, mentally and physically challenging training that’s going to develop your small unit leaders, you need to come here.”

— Lt. Col. John J. Carroll



Summer's official start, June 21, is rapidly approaching, and that means an increase in activities such as barbeques, parties, travelling, swimming, boating, cycling, hiking, and camping, to name a few. The onset of summer also brings with it the 101 Critical Days of Summer Campaign, which runs from Memorial Day, May 28, to Labor Day, Sept. 30. During the 101 Critical Days of Summer Campaign, units and organizations are asked to provide their Marines and sailors with the tools and training necessary to help them participate in their summer recreational activities in a safe and responsible manner.



TIPS

For Water Safety

★ Water Awareness

- Learn to swim.
- Swim where lifeguards are present.
- Keep a close eye on the kids.
- Obey signs about water conditions.
- Watch for rip currents at the beach.
- Don't panic.
- If you are trapped in a rip current, swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current, then head for shore.

★ Boating Safety

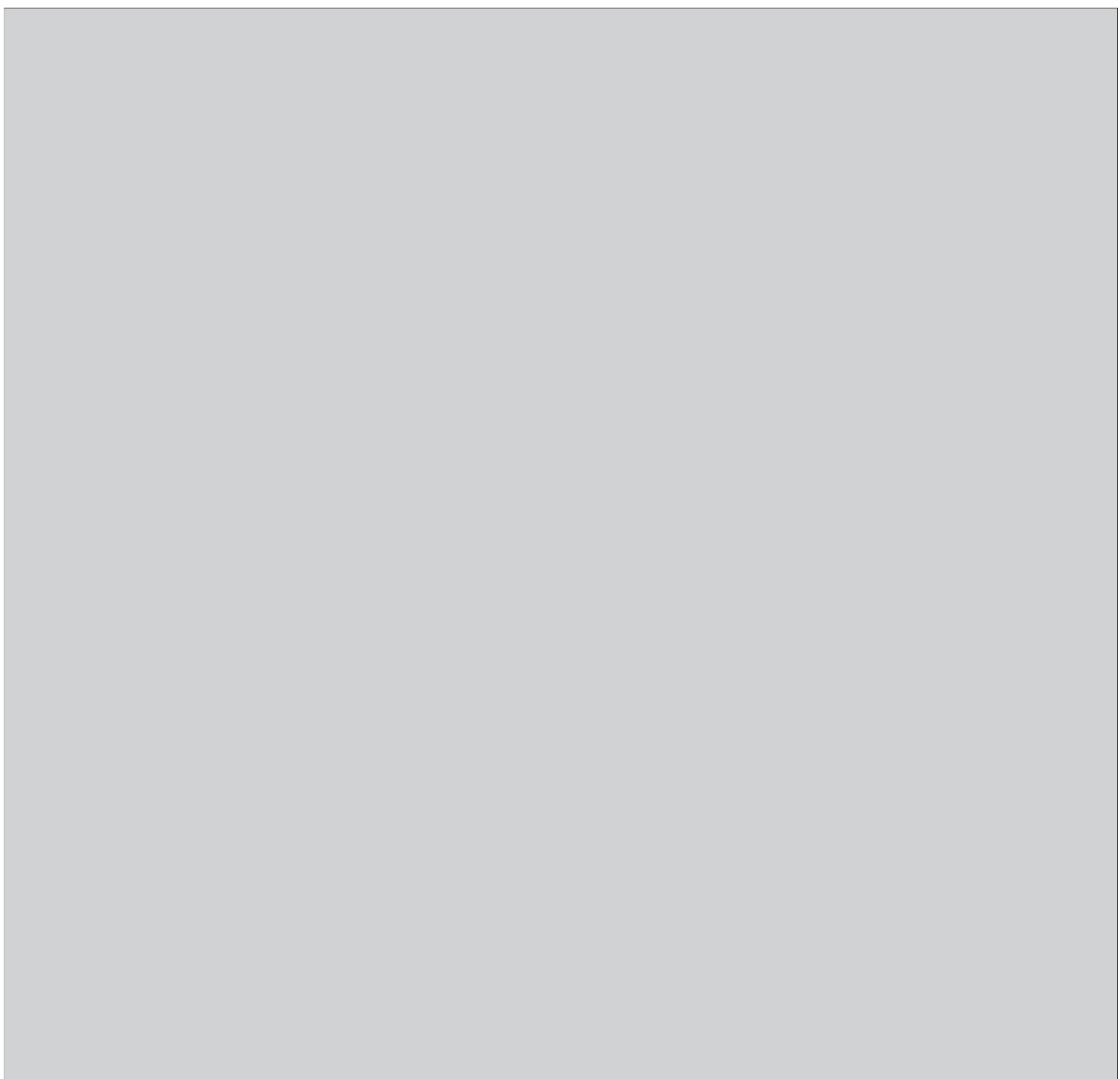
- Take a Coast Guard approved boating class.
- Ensure everyone aboard has a personal floatation device.

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Soapbox Derby

Story and photos by Kelly O'Sullivan



"Man down, man down!" Jared Brase shouted when the back of his racecar popped loose as his dad jockeyed him into position for his first heat in the 2012 Armed Services YMCA Soapbox Derby on June 2.

"Call in the pit crew," Sgt. Maj. Matthew B. Brookshire, Combat Center sergeant major, advised as the boy's dad, Staff Sgt. Joel Brase, and several ASYMCA volunteers quickly reattached the errant part to the miniature replica of a desert camouflaged tank.

Catastrophe averted, the 7-year-old and three pint-sized rivals barreled down Donnell Hill in downtown Twentynine Palms the second Brookshire blasted an air horn signaling the start of the race.

For two hours, 53 racers ages 5 to 14 piloted their hand-made, one-of-a-kind soapbox cars downhill at varying speeds during the annual event held in conjunction with the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce's annual Street Fair & Car Show.

"This is a great community event. I want to thank all the families for coming out ... I wish you all luck," Brookshire told the crowd during opening ceremonies, asking everyone to "Keep those forward-deployed in your thoughts and prayers."

Twentynine Palms Mayor John Cole echoed those sentiments, adding, "As we join these two segments of Twentynine Palms, it's always exciting."

"It's nice to see the families having a good time," Brookshire said as he walked down the hill after his official race duties were over. "It's amazing all the work they put into these cars."

Brookshire also was on hand to select the General's Choice Award recipient on behalf of the General's Choice Award commanding general, Brig. Gen. George W. Smith, choosing 8-year-old Elijah Arzola's USMC Willy's Jeep racecar for the honor.

Cole's Mayor's Choice Award went to Nathan Pratt's Sharkmobile and the ASYMCA Chairman Dominic Westfall's Chairman's Choice Award went to Brock Loechler's Super Mario car.

Loechler's dad, Master Gunnery Sgt. Brent Loechler of the Combat Center's Explosive Ordnance Division, said it was his son's first Soapbox Derby, but not his last.

"It was a really good experience," he said. "YMCA did a really good job."

Each time racers passed the finish line, one of the more than 100 Marines and sailors who volunteered to work the event pushed more cars back up the hill, undaunted by the 100-degree weather.

Pfc. William Louis, who was on his eighth trip up the hill without breaking a sweat, said he volunteered to work the race

after seeing an ASYMCA flier.

"It feels good to help out the kids," said the 19-year-old Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School student from Florida. "It's nice to give back."

After the races, the crowd gathered around the awards tent, talking shop and comparing notes while Fisher and volunteer Robin Crooms tallied the results.

"The racers did awesome," Fisher said as the crowd cheered loudly. Fisher announced each racer by name so they could come forward to accept their medals, trophies, snack packs and souvenir water bags. Armed Services YMCA Executive Director Anita Neu-Fultz passed them out.

"I need more hands," the executive director joked as the excited kids lined up behind her. Every child who participated received a medal.

Neu-Fultz, who has cheered on racers in every ASYMCA Soapbox Derby since 2005, said the event couldn't happen without the volunteers and the sponsors.

"It's just a fun time," she said. "The volunteers are phenomenal. They set up, root on the children and do the inspections. Without them, we couldn't do it."



[Top] Haylea Cassady, 5, waits for her turn to race. It was her first-ever Soapbox Derby competition.
 [Center] Armed Services YMCA volunteers line both sides of Donnell Hill in downtown Twentynine Palms to ensure racers' safety as their soapboxes head toward the finish line. More than 100 Marines and sailors worked the annual event.

[Bottom] Elijah Arzola, 8, relaxes between races. His replica of a USMC Willy's Jeep won the General's Choice Award, and he placed first in the 5- to 8-year-old Stock Division.

And the winners are...

- General's Choice:** Elijah Arzola, USMC Willy's Jeep
- Mayor's Choice:** Nathan Pratt, Sharkmobile
- Chairman's Choice:** Brock Loechler, Super Mario Car
- 5 to 8-year-old Stock Division**
- 1st: Elijah Arzola
- 2nd: Thomas Winson IV
- 3rd: Ryker Hansen
- 9 to 14-year-old Stock Division**
- 1st: Jake Cameron
- 2nd: Allie Pratt
- 3rd: Patrick Patterson
- 5 to 8-year-old Super Stock Division**
- 1st: Kevin Dougherty
- 2nd: Brannan Dougherty
- 3rd: Austin Evans
- 9 to 14-year old Super Stock Division**
- 1st: Carson Estrada
- 2nd: Connor Andrews
- 3rd: Rachel Roybal



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Friday: Social hour with food, 5 - 7 p.m. followed by DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m., Ladies Night
Saturday: Variety Night, DJ Gjettblaque 8 - 11 p.m.
Thursday: Social hour, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Friday: Social hour with food, 5 - 7 p.m.
Wednesday: Free gourmet bar food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social hour, 7 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Social hour, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Monday: Steak night and full menu, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
Tuesday: Social hour, 5 - 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social hour, 5 - 7 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday: Steak night, 5 - 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch, from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Thursday: Taco Night, 5 - 7 p.m.

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

Local Events

The Memory Jar

When: Every Friday, Saturday & Sunday, June 8-17
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For tickets and information call 316-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Free Line Dance Lessons

Learn to dance to traditional country music
When: 5 - 9 p.m., every Sunday
Where: Willie Boy's Saloon and Dance Hall
50048 29 Palms Hwy, Morongo Valley, Calif.
For more information, call 363-3343.

The Sunday Band

Been playing for the restaurant for 6 years
When: 7 p.m., Sunday, June 10
Where: Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace
53688 Pioneertown Rd., Poinneertown, Calif.
For more information, call 365-5956.

Lower Desert

Jon Secada

90s contemporary soloist, latin pop artist
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, June 16
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Joan Sebastian

Grammy Award-winning Mexican singer, songwriter
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, June 16
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Carlos Mencia

Night of laughter with famous comedian
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, June 16
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Ron White

Stand-up comedian entertains live
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, July 7
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, June 8

9 p.m. - Lockout, Rated PG-13
Midnight - Cabin in the Woods, Rated R

Saturday, June 9

10:30 a.m. - **Free Matinee** Despicable Me, Rated PG
12:30 p.m. - The Three Stooges, Rated PG
3 p.m. - The Pirate, Band of Misfits 3D, Rated PG
6 p.m. - The Lucky One, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - The Five Year Engagement, Rated R
Midnight - The Raven, Rated R

Sunday, June 10

12:30 p.m. - The Pirate, Band of Misfits, Rated PG
3 p.m. - Think like a Man, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - The Pirate, Band of Misfits 3D, Rated PG
9 p.m. - The Raven, Rated R

Monday, June 11

7 p.m. - Lockout, Rated PG-13

Tuesday, June 12

7 p.m. - The Pirate, Band of Misfits 3D, Rated PG

Wednesday, June 13

5:30 p.m. - The Three Stooges, Rated PG
8:30 p.m. - Cabin in the Woods, Rated R

Thursday, June 14

5:30 p.m. - The Pirate, Band of Misfits 3D, Rated PG
8:30 p.m. - Lockout, Rated PG-13

Popular sci-fi comedy franchise takes time-travel twist



COURTESY PHOTO

Fifteen years ago, the first "Men in Black" movie introduced the characters of Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones as special agents of an organization in charge of maintaining a "safe zone" for extraterrestrial-alien refugees disguised as Earthlings. A second movie, in 2002, punched the story along with new sci-fi comedy twists. This time, the pair go back in time to prevent a catastrophic event.

NEIL POND

"Men in Black 3"

Starring Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones & Josh Brolin
Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld
PG-13, 103 min.

Fifteen years ago, the first "Men in Black" movie introduced the characters of Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones as special agents of an organization in charge of maintaining a "safe zone" for extraterrestrial-alien refugees disguised as Earthlings. A second movie, in 2002, punched the story along with new sci-fi comedy twists.

Now, 10 years later, we catch up again with still-wise-cracking Agent J (Smith) and still-grumpy Agent K (Jones), and find they're still keeping the intergalactic peace in and around their agency's base of New York City, still zapping bystanders' memories of close encounters with their

mind-erasing "neuralizer" wands, still shaking down law-breaking E.T.'s, still trading zippy quips and burry barbs.

Nothing much has changed with the men, the suits (black), the ties (skinny), the sunglasses, or the situation, which is undoubtedly why returning director Barry Sonnenfeld and the film's writers decided to shake things up this time around.

After setting the stage with a prison jailbreak on the moon by a theatrically menacing new villain, Boris the Animal (Jemaine Clement), the movie gets the gears spinning by sending Smith's Agent J back in time to prevent an incident that would prove fatal to Jones' Agent K—and disastrous to the planet.

This time-jump contrivance transposes the setting to 1969, which gives the movie a rollicking ride on the grooves of a swingin' scene shakin' all over with the confluence of bell bottoms, bee-

hive hairdos and happy hippies. But most importantly, the time warp brings J (and the story) into a fateful intersection with the younger version of his senior partner, decades before they'd meet up otherwise.

Josh Brolin plays the 29-year-old K with an almost uncanny grasp on Tommy Lee Jones' speech and mannerisms. It's a real trip watching him work his acting magic.

"Saturday Night Live" actor Bill Hader has a great, hilarious scene as Andy Warhol (who knew the pop-art icon was actually an MIB agent??). Oscar winner Emma Thompson debuts as the new head of the agency, with a secretive connection to a previous, happier time when Agent K wasn't so surly and sullen. An alien humanoid who can see into various versions of the future, the gentle Griffin (Michael Stuhlbarg), provides a 1969 explanation on how the Mets "miracu-

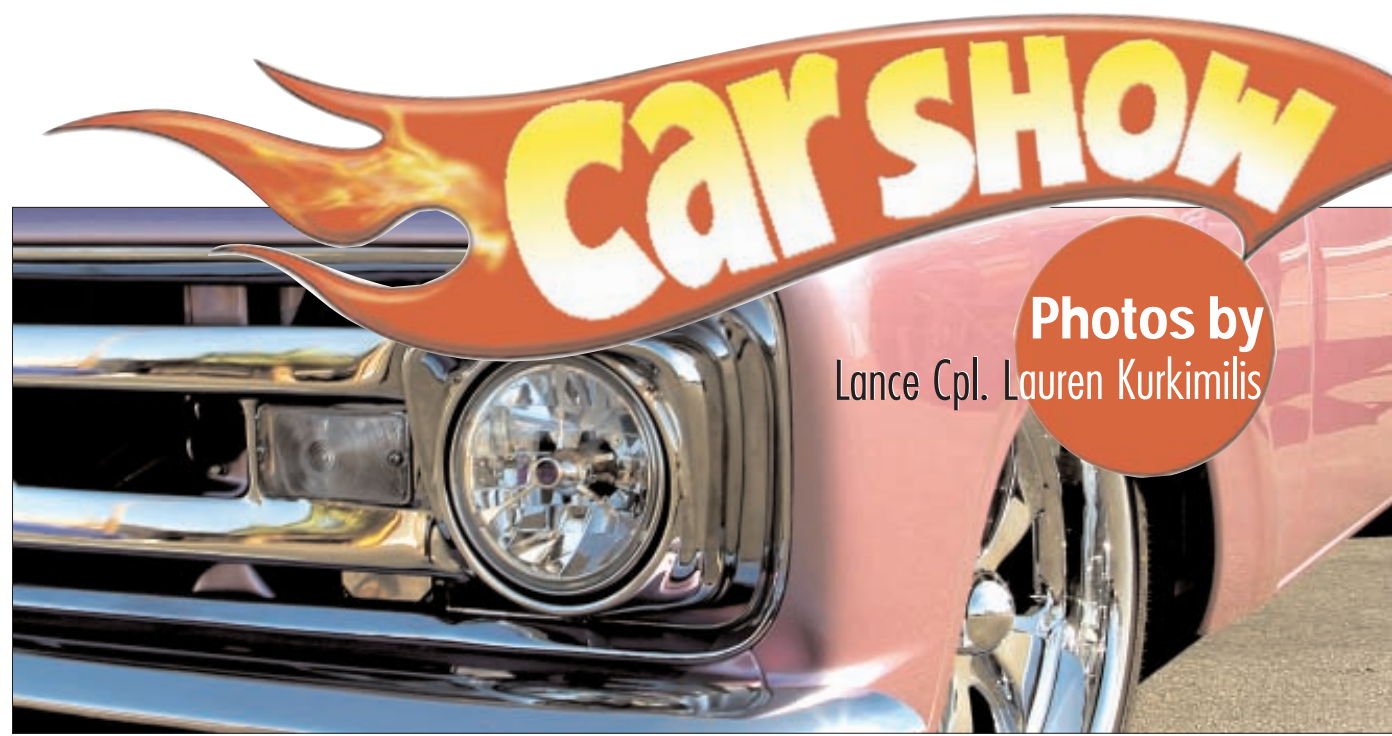
lously" went on to win the World Series later that year.

The movie dials down the usual MIB quota of creepy-crawly alien effects and ups the human element for this trip down the time tunnel, with a running theme of mortality, fatherhood and uncovering the mysteries of the past.

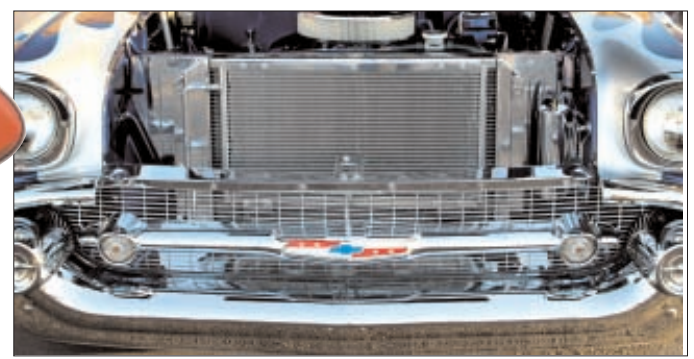
But the sap never gets too syrupy. There are some cool gyroscopic unicycles, a Chinese restaurant in which the food bites back (quite literally) and a rousing slugfest atop the Cape Canaveral rocket tower as the seconds tick down to the historic launch of Apollo 11.

But mostly, there are Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones and now Josh Brolin, looking cool and dashing around in skinny black suits and little ties, making us giggle here and there, and keeping the world safe so we can all rest easy, once again.

Ah, summer.



Photos by
Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis



Marines get involved in 12th Annual Street Fair



More than 50 cars, trucks and motorcycles were displayed in the 12th Annual Street Fair and Car Show. The vehicles were judged in 11 categories to include People's choice and Mayor's Choice. Marines from 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion set up a static display of military vehicles for the public to see. For more photos, check out the Twentynine Palms Car Show album at [facebook.com/thecombatcenter](https://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter).

Cpl Sean Smith, gunner, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, shows John-john Housnick, age 12, an M-240 machine gun at the Twentynine Palms Car Show in downtown Twentynine Palms June 2.

