



July 27, 2012

OBSERVATION POST

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Enlisted early out MarAdmin approves VEERP

Cpl. Sarah Dietz
Combat Correspondent

Marines can now exit the Corps with an honorable discharge a year earlier than their original end of active service date.

Marine Administrative Message 371/12 approved the start of the Voluntary Enlisted Early Release Program, and gives certain Marines the option of electing an early discharge. The MarAdmin is effective immediately and continues until September 2013.

The VEERP is being implemented as a cost-saving initiative, permitting the shaping and sustainment of the force within the approved budget constraints, according to MarAdmin 371/12. It will aid in the Corps' upcoming drawdown effort, scheduled to begin this October.

Units will not rate replacements for Marines who choose to participate in the VEERP until the Marine's original EAS date.

Commanders will need to recommend approval of a specific date of separation when endorsing a Marine's request for early release and must provide specific justification for individual Marines not recommended for approval to participate in the program.

The VEERP is approved for Marines with an EAS within fiscal year 2013. Marines with an EAS on or after Oct. 1 of this year are not qualified to separate prior to Oct. 1, 2012. Applicants also need to be eligible for an honorable discharge and cannot be scheduled to deploy.

Units will not rate replacements for Marines who choose to participate in the VEERP until the Marine's original EAS date.

Those not eligible are Marines scheduled for transfer to the retired list; Marines who are indebted to the Marine Corps, which includes advance and excess leave; those who already fall under the Headquarters Marine Corps early out programs; Marines involved in the National Call to Service Program; and Marines already on terminal leave.

Marines who manifest symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury and are undergoing post

See **VEERP** page A5

AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT

Marine Corps technology by land and sea

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

The Marine Corps' amphibious roots go back to its birth in 1776. However, the more modern amphibious vehicles and the battalions responsible for them were developed around the time of the two world wars.

Through the decades, the vehicles, as well as the Assault Amphibian Battalion Marines who operate them, have grown and developed through the various combat encounters the Marine Corps has faced.

The Amphibious Assault Vehicle's earlier prototype, Landing Vehicle Tracked, was nothing more than a logistics vehicle derived from a vehicle called Donald Roebling's "Alligator." The Alligator was a tracked vehicle primarily used for search and rescue missions after hurricanes.

During the initial amphibious landing on the island of Tarawa during WWII, the LVT proved to be more than just a logistics platform.

When the Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel and Landing Ship Tank were unable to cross the island's coral reefs, putting the landing in jeopardy, the LVT's ability to both swim in the water and crawl across the reefs made it ideal for the assault forces.

"If it wasn't for amphibious trackers back in the Pacific, we couldn't have completed the island campaign. It's where it got its roots storming the beaches and getting the boots on the ground," said Sgt. Kyle L. Hogan, section leader, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, which is stationed at the Combat Center.

The LVT was further militarized and was the tip of the spear for the Marine Corps' amphibious assaults in the



PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI



[Top] Staff Sgt. Byron A. England, assault amphibian section leader, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, directs Marines on the firing line July 12 during a live-fire shoot at Range 110A.

[Bottom] Marines with 3rd AABn engage in live-fire target practice July 12.

Pacific during WWII.

The LVT has stood the test of time and has been the mainstay of the Marine Corps' ship-to-shore mobility. From the early model of the LVT-1, the tracked vehicle has progressed to the LVT-7, renamed the AAV for the Marine Corps.

Although it has retained its

basic design, the amphibious vehicle has been upgraded and adapted to the Corps' needs throughout the years. It has been continuously revamped with new weapons systems, appliqué armor and more powerful and efficient engines.

The AAV used today surpasses all previous models,

overcoming the shortfall that any previous LVT may have had. It has a mounted M2 .50-caliber machine gun, MK19 grenade launcher and is hauling a less volatile diesel engine. With the addition of water jet impellers and weighing 14,000 pounds less than its previous model, the current AAV is lighter, faster and more powerful than ever.

There are multiple amphibious units around the Marine Corps, including the one in the last place anyone expected an amphibious unit – the desert.

These desert-dwelling Marines describe the inside of the metal-hulled AAVs as a hot box in the summer and a refrigerator in cold weather. The AAV is at its best in the water and uses the ambient temperature of the water around it to cool itself.

While the dry, barren environment might seem to be a severe disadvantage to the vehicles' crews, the Marines of Company D, 3rd AABn, have used the sandy terrain to their advantage to strengthen their skills.

"I'm always impressed with Delta Company's professionalism and their ability to maintain their amphibious proficiency while they primarily operate in a desert environment," said Lt. Col. Howard Hall, battalion commander, 3rd AABn.

The 3rd AABn. Marines practice their shooting on an indoor simulated marksmanship trainer turret. They hone those skills to expert level during live-fire exercises at the base's many outdoor ranges. The Marines also take advantage of the unique terrain the Combat Center provides.

They focus on driving, maneuvering and shooting in the type of tough desert terrain they will more than likely experience

See **AAV** page A5

'1st Tanks' 1st arrival

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

The advanced party for Company A, 1st Tank Battalion returned home to the Combat Center July 20.

The 15 Marines will be closely followed by the approximately 100 Marines in the main body, who are scheduled to arrive at the Combat Center soon.

During their time here, the advanced party Marines will be preparing for their brothers' return. They'll set up the company offices and make sure the barracks are ready.

Upon the larger group's arrival, the advanced party will also help unload the truck full of bags to speed up the process of getting the returning Marines to the barracks or their homes for a well-deserved rest.

The company has spent the past seven months on a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Their return home is a weight off the shoulders of the families and their fellow Marines.

"Everyone is coming home safe," said Jany Wasdin, family readiness officer, 1st Tank Battalion. "That's the best news."

Keep yourself, your gear safe

Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu
Combat Correspondent

When gear is missing, the responsibility ultimately falls on the Marine who signed for the gear.

The Combat Center's Inspector General's Office is committed to bringing to light a growing trend of cases involving Marines losing their gear or having it stolen because of recklessness on their part.

"The problem is the lack of accountability from the Marines," said Gunnery Sgt. Michael Lamar, assistant command inspector chief, Inspector General's Office for the Combat Center. "Even if

It's a base-wide problem. It's not just happening in the barracks. It's happening in base housing as well.

—Gunnery Sgt. Hong Huang

the gear is stolen, the Marine is still responsible," Lamar said. "If they are found to have not taken proper protective measures, like safely securing their gear and locking it away."

There has been an increase of missing or stolen gear aboard the Combat Center in recent months according to the Provost Marshal's Office.

The staff at the Inspector General's Office wants Marines to take better care of and be responsible for their gear.

"It's a base-wide problem," Gunnery Sgt. Hong Huang, command inspector chief. "It's not just happening in the barracks, it's happening in base housing."

With more than a 100 case of larceny so far this year, the Inspector

General's Office is worried that the steady increasing of the lack of responsibility will hurt the individual Marines' careers and finances, as well as the Corps.

Lamar spoke of a case in base housing where one resident left the garage open for a number of days, which soon resulted in the theft of their belongings. When a neighbor was suspected and questioned, she replied with, "Well, they left their garage open."

Theft in base housing areas accounts for nearly 20 percent of all larceny incidents reported on base.

Although the neighbor was wrong in using the open garage door as an excuse, leaving

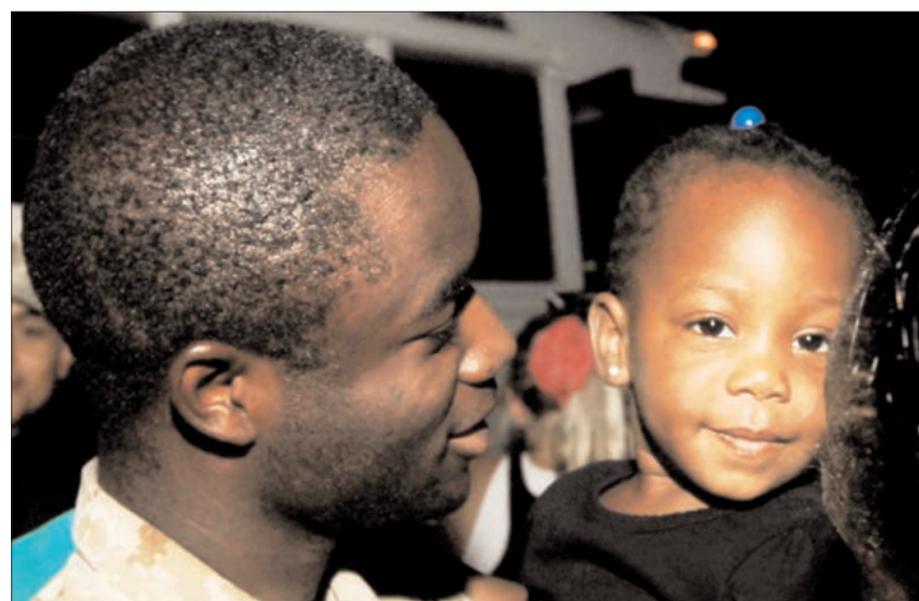
gear in open garages or in truck beds was irresponsible on the Marines' part, Lamar said.

Repercussions and punishments for lost gear vary by unit, at the command's discretion.

"It's always a command decision when it comes to handling missing gear," Huang said. "We need Marines to have a different mindset. We need the Marines to do the right thing, and we need the units to help make sure they do so."

"We see it time and time again," Lamar added. "Marines say that they shouldn't have to pay for the lost

See **GEAR** page A5



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

Cpl. Henry Gray, tank crewman, Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, is welcomed home by his 19-month-old son, Kaylem, at the Co. A advance party homecoming event July 20.

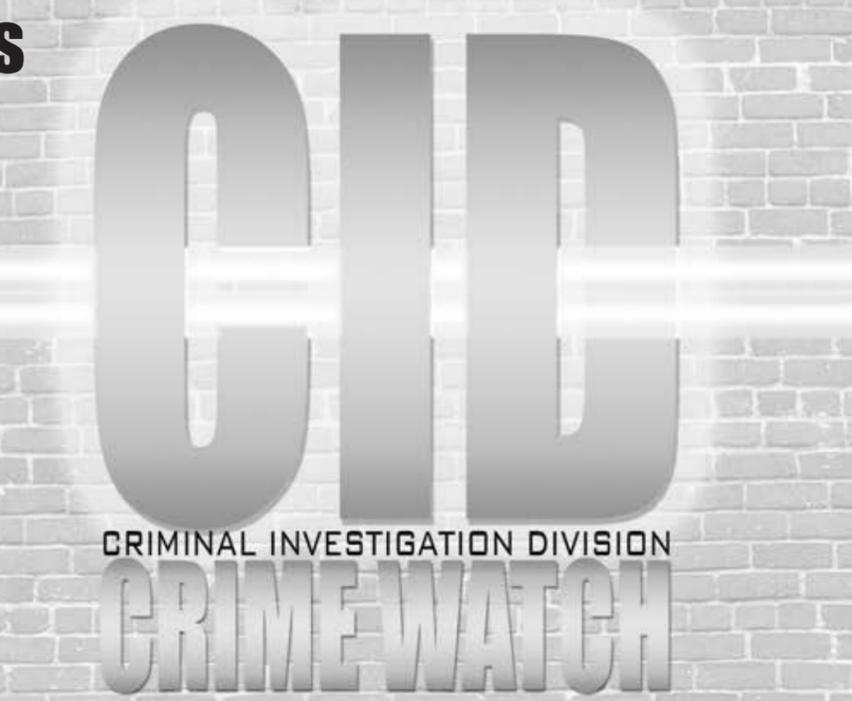
Corps cracks down on drugs

SPECIAL TO THE OBSERVATION POST

The Provost Marshal's Office, Criminal Investigation Division, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., has a Special Enforcement Section that routinely initiates narcotic interdiction operations. Over the past year, several operations have targeted the unlawful use and distribution of synthetic drugs, mainly the synthetic stimulants mephedrone, methylenedioxypyrovalerone (MDPV), and marijuana-mimicking substances more commonly referred to as "Spice" and "Bath Salts." **These synthetic drugs are fabricated through chemical compounds and have recently hospitalized several service members due to their severe adverse effects.** On Nov. 24, 2010, the Drug Enforcement Administration placed five specific chemical compounds typically found in Spice into Schedule I of the Controlled Substance Act under the authority of 21 U.S.C. 811. On July 9 this year, President Barack Obama signed into law a ban on the sale, possession, manufacture and distribution of 31 chemicals used in synthetic marijuana and bath salts, including MDPV and mephedrone. Possession or distribution of a banned substance is a violation of Article 112 (a) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Marine Corps policy requires that violators will be processed for administrative discharge.

45% of criminal investigations this year conducted by CID, aboard MCAGCC were drug related.

In an effort to counter this alarming trend, the Commanding General has placed numerous smoke shops within the high desert area, off limits. Surveillance operations are routinely conducted in the vicinity of these smoke shops. Active duty service members seen entering these businesses are then detained and cited with an offense report. If they are caught possessing a controlled substance, a criminal investigation is initiated and the



To counter the drug trend, numerous smoke shops within the high desert area are off limits. **Surveillance operations are routinely conducted in the vicinity of these smoke shops.**

results are turned over to the Marine's parent command for administrative action. In the past 90 days, a number of active duty service members have been caught and arrested for this criminal activity. The challenge goes out to every active duty service member and civilian living and/or working aboard this installation to protect our heritage, preserve our honor, and live up to the principles upon which our beloved Corps was founded.

OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

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

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.

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

In Twentynine Palms:

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

In Yucca Valley:

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

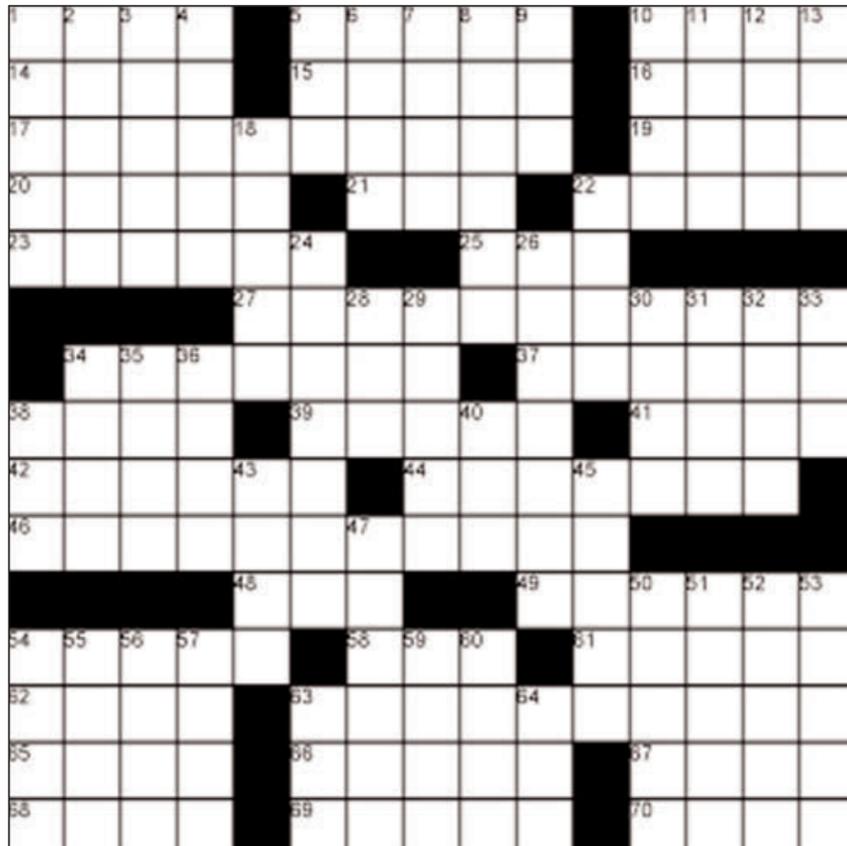
In Palm Springs:

- 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>

WE DO WINDOWS

See answers on page A3



ACROSS

- Grin from ear to ear
- B-29's quartet, for short
- Make ready for surgery
- "__ Wanna Do" (Sheryl Crow it)
- Availabl for rental
- Still capable of exploding
- Dead end
- Old phone button abbr.
- "Old MacDonald" refrain
- Lassie's mate
- Was really awful
- Biological quintet
- Earth-friendly prefix
- Navy, e.g.
- __ Bay, Jamaica
- __ to go (eager)
- Iranian of old
- Ship's guidance system
- Bowed, in music

DOWN

- Toyland visitors
- "Dallas" matriarch
- "Star Trek" extra
- Revealing skirts
- School gp.
- Bowler's shot
- __ podrida
- The Carolinas' __ River
- Piggy abode
- Novel's essence
- Longtime Philbin cohort Kelly
- Deadlocked
- Exec's extra
- Biblical verb
- Soft seat
- Kind of sheepdog or pony
- The Ivy League's Big Red
- In the past
- Architectural order
- Baby sitter's nightmare
- Euros replaced them

- Fathers' brothers, for short
- Swellhead's problem
- Beanery handout
- Baltic Sea feeder
- Digs of twigs
- Comfy shoe
- Toothpaste-endorsing org.
- New York's __ River
- Without support
- New Hampshire city
- Stuffed deli delicacy
- Eva or Zsa Zsa
- Practice piece
- Old Venetian magistrates
- "Pygmalion" penner
- Silent performer
- Temptation scene
- Time to give up
- Jabba the __
- Gridiron great Graham
- Absorb, with "up"
- Won __ soup

SUDOKU #2611-D

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE HARD HEAD

Sgt. Sergio V. Rolon

2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment
24, Victorville, California

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI
July 23, 2012

> **I've always liked the desert.** You can pretty much do anything from dirt bike riding to shooting.

> **A lot of people don't know I like country music.** Garth Brooks is my favorite singer. The guy can hit the vocals.

> **Growing up I like a lot of rap,** and when I got into high school and the Marine Corps, I liked rock. I was just amped up all the time. I figured out that country calms me down. Now I like being chill all the time.

> **I had a range** behind my parents' house. We mainly used shotguns.

> **My heart is** still with the shotgun.

> **I tried out for football** in high school. I wasn't that great at it, but I made the team.

> **I got into** wrestling, and I did after-school rugby.

> **I was really hard headed** growing up, so anytime something seemed like a challenge, I would try it. I thought the Marines was going to be tough.

> **One of my buddies** was joining the Marines, so one day I just walked into a recruiting office after wrestling practice. I was only 16 at the time, so they told me to come back when I was older.

> **I came back when I was 17.** A few weeks later, my recruiter came to my house and talked to my parents.

> **Joining the Corps was** a pride thing.

> **I hated boot camp** and the School of Infantry. I went from someone people looked up to to being treated like dirt. It was a big culture shock for me.

> **You get that feeling after you graduate** like, 'Oh yeah I'm a Marine now,' then you get to SOI.

> **I've been in Twentynine Palms for seven years,** 2/7 for seven years and Fox Company for seven years.

> **I thought I was getting out.** I was dead set on it. One day my company gunny asked if I was going to reenlist, I told him no. When he asked, "Why not?" I said, "Because you won't give me BAH." Jokingly he told me if I reenlist, he'll get me BAH. So I said alright.

> **In the career planners' office,** I said I wanted to deploy, so I stayed with 2/7 in hopes to do just that.

> **I've gone on two combat deployments,** one to Iraq and one to Afghanistan.

> **In Iraq, I lifted weights a lot.** I lifted four times a day. On patrols, I'd eat like a whole box of MREs. I went over there 130 pounds and came back 195 pounds.

> **In Afghanistan, I did the opposite.** I probably came back 130 pounds.

> **We played a game** called Afghan Ball. It's a morphed version of baseball we made up. You have to play it with a ball of tape.

> **The most important rule** of Afghan Ball is you have to talk smack.

> **I have a bronze star** with a "V." I got it in Afghanistan. My favorite medal by far though is my NAM.

> **My CO came up to me and asked** if I wanted a ceremony. I said no. He handed me the paper, and I couldn't stop smiling.

> **Me and my friends would joke** that sometimes you just want somebody to say "Good job." It's probably because you're always getting yelled at.

> **I have seven motorcycles.** A chopper, a heritage, a dirt bike, two of them are kind of a mixture, a Honda Magna and an R1.

> **When I first started** buying motorcycles I was a lance corporal. My plan was to have seven motorcycles so I could change bikes every day of the week.

> **It's actually a lot more** money to keep up with the maintenance on a bike.

> **My first bike** was a 2003 sportster, gun blue. It actually got stolen out of a parking lot. I parked it over-night, went down to San Diego, and when I came back in the morning, it was gone.

> **I went around for two days** with a CID agent. By the end of the investigation he looked at me and said, "Congratulations, we know you didn't steal your bike."

> **I go on rides** back home. There's a little bar in my home town. It's my home away from home. The guys that go there put together a ride every now and then and they'll drag me out.

> **Dirt bikes are the least** that I ride. More often than not, I'm on the cruisers. I love my sports bike, but it's not really meant for the road. It's meant to be out on the track.

> **I like ground fighting,** but just with friends. I'll watch UFC with my roommates, but I'm more into boxing.

> **I use to box every Thanksgiving.** My dad would go out and buy boxing gloves. My brothers and I would go at it in front of our family.

> **There's no competition** at all. At a very early age, I knocked out both of my brothers, and it's been like that ever since.

Editor's note for acronyms:

BAH - Basic Allowance for Housing

MRE - Meals, Ready to Eat

NAM - Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal

CID - Criminal Investigation Division



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Get Accepted

Story by
Sgt. Heather Golden

Military scholars ahead of competition for college admissions

A new academic partnership may mean all the difference for transitioning Marines waiting on acceptance letters to their schools of choice.

The Leadership Scholar Program, which is sponsored by Marine Corps Community Services, connects colleges and universities with the kind of high-caliber applicants schools look for in potential students.

Marines who qualify for and are accepted into the program are given special consideration for admission into participating schools. With more than 200 schools within the LSP partnership, schools even go as far as to reserve a specific number of seats for Marines. Acceptance into the LSP does not guarantee acceptance into the participating schools.

To qualify, applicants must be active duty, reserve or veteran Marines planning to attend a school as freshmen or transfer students. Those currently on active duty must be honorably discharged before the beginning of the school semester. Applicants must have an Armed Forces Qualification Test score of at least 70 and a General Technical score of at least 115, and be high school graduates. High school equivalencies, like the GED, will only be considered with significant college credits. Waivers for all the above requirements are available on a case-by-case basis.

The LSP is not open to graduate students. Marines

whose active duty obligation goes beyond the beginning of that semester should wait to apply until the next application cycle.

Marines must also have acceptable SAT or ACT scores. These scores, and their expiration dates, are determined by each individual school. Deadlines for application are also at the schools' discretion. These requirements are available under each school's detailed information within the participating schools list located on the LSP website.

A board considers each application for the program based upon the individual's potential to successfully complete college.

To apply, Marines need to submit an unofficial copy of their high school transcript; an unofficial copy of their collage transcripts; their SMART transcript; certified true copies of NAVMC118 pages (3), (11) and (12); certified true copies of Record of Service, Basic Individual Record, Basic Training Record, awards page, and education record; and a letter of recommendation from their commanding officer or any officer for whom they have worked. Phone and email contact information for this officer is also accepted in lieu of a letter.

The endorsements should be similar in structure to the endorsement required in a Marine Corps fitness

report, and should detail "the Marine's demonstrated performance and potential for growth and successful completion of a college degree program," according to the website.

For more information, to find schools or to get started on an application, go to the LSP website and click the red icon marked "Marines" in the center of the page.

Application packages can be sent by mail to:

Leadership Scholar Program
Marine and Family Programs Division
ATTN: Caitlin Pfister
3820 Russell Road
Quantico, Va 22134

The packages can also be faxed. Contact the LSP at (760) 429-4124 for faxing directions.

A full list of participating schools can be found on the LSP's website at:

<http://www.leadershipscholarprogram.com>

The list includes both public and private schools, and even a handful of Ivy League universities.

Feds Feed Families

Commissaries support food drive campaign

By Jessica Newby

DeCA public affairs specialist



FORT LEE, Va. — Commissaries are once again playing a key role as government agencies and organizations across the U.S. support the 2012 Feds Feed Families food drive campaign, which runs through Aug. 31.

Military customers and federal employees can donate nonperishable food and personal hygiene items to the campaign using marked bins located at the entrances or exits of participating commissaries.

Last year, 770,000 pounds of foodstuffs were donated at commissary locations. The DOD 2012 Feds Feed Families campaign set its goal at 1.5 million pounds.

The Feds Feed Families food drive campaign grew out of the Serve America Act that created "United We Serve," an initiative that urged Americans to contribute to the nation's economic recovery by helping their communities. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the

"DeCA's customers and employees can and will make a difference in the lives of the children and families dealing with hunger."

- Joseph H. Jeu

Donations to the program help charitable organizations such as local food banks.

"In this tough economy, sometimes it's hard to make ends meet," said Director and CEO, DeCA, Joseph H. Jeu. "More people than ever before are using food banks, which are struggling to meet the demand. This food drive is an extra boost to keep families fed."

Chief Human Capital Council are managing the campaign. Commissary participation is tied to its local installation's ability to provide support to pick up and deliver the donated items.

"DeCA's customers and employees can and will make a difference in the lives of the children and families dealing with hunger," Jeu said.

The most needed items for donations include:

- Canned vegetables – low sodium, no salt
- Canned fruits – in light syrup or its own juices
- Canned proteins – tuna, salmon, chicken, peanut butter and beans
- Soups – beef stew, chili, chicken noodle, turkey or rice
- Condiments – tomato-based sauces, light soy sauce, ketchup, mustard, salad dressing or oils
- Snacks – individually packed snacks, crackers, trail mix, dried fruit, granola and cereal bars, pretzels and sandwich crackers
- Multigrain cereal
- 100 percent juice – all sizes, including juice boxes
- Grains – brown and white rice, oatmeal, bulgar, quinoa, couscous, pasta, and macaroni and cheese
- Paper products and household items – paper towels, napkins, cleaning supplies
- Hygiene items – diapers, deodorants (men and women), feminine products, toilet paper, tissues, soap, toothpaste and shampoo

Stay Healthy **this summer**

Summer Time! What do you think of when you think of summer? Beautiful weather, enjoying cool waters of the on-base pools, soaking up the vitamin D-rich sunshine or working out in one of our gyms to prepare for this year's swimsuit reveal?

For many of us, summertime is a time to re-fresh and renew our resolutions to be healthy. Keep in mind that there is more to being healthy than a good SPF sunscreen and a low BMI; mental health is often the forgotten link in living a more health-conscious life. While you are contemplating what changes you are ready to make, take a moment to reflect on your relationships, your stress levels and goals that you may want to set for your own mental well-being.

Classes and workshops are available for individuals and couples and range from topics such as Stress and Anger to Couples Communication.

Services and resources are available to assist you in reaching your fullest potential. For more information, call 830-6345.



VEERP, from A1

deployment health evaluation and management care will not be separated under this authority until that process is complete or a waiver of treatment evaluation has been executed by a medical professional.

For more information see MarAdmin 371/12. Contact your unit's career planner for information on how to apply or to see if you meet qualification requirements.

GEAR, from A1

gear, even though they left it in the back of their truck."

When Marines deploy, personal gear accountability is a priority. For many, that doesn't translate as a priority when back in garrison.

Lost and stolen gear costs the Corps a great deal of money. It also costs individual Marines.

Marines missing gear, whether through loss or theft, they need to report it

to their chain of command. If gear is stolen, the incident must be reported promptly to the proper authorities and the individual chain of command.

"We have to get Marines to realize that it is in their own best interest to keep their gear safe," Huang said. "It comes down to small unit leadership to make sure that Marines are taking care of their gear."

AAV, from A1

overseas. The Marines encounter new elements that can't be found on other bases — extreme heat, unique dust signature, sand and shell rocks.

They also routinely conduct the aquatic portion of their training along the beaches around Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

"When they're up and going, nothing can be better," Hogan said. "But out here we're mainly desert rats."

They are a multi-capable and multi-tasked unit during deployments to combat zones, even ones without oceans close by. They provide support, both from inside and outside of the AAVs by conducting patrol and providing riot control.

"You get the best of both words. You get the best of amtracker and grunt, especially in this company," said Cpl. Dustin S. Frank, crew chief, Co. D, 3rd AABn. "Most of the time it's exciting, especially when we do field operations."

The 3rd AABn. Marines call themselves "Alligators," taking it from the original rescue vehicle.

As the Marine Corps only ship-to-shore tactical vehicle, the AAV stands as the forefront in amphibious assaults with the capable Marines of 3rd AABn inside.

"Amtracks play a big part in it," Frank said. "It's what the Marine Corps is — Amphibious."



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

Marines with 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion engage in live-fire target practice July 12 at Range 110A.

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Vacation Bible School

Combat Center kids find summer fun

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi



[Top] Eleya Newton, 9, daughter of Gunnery Sgt. Frankie Newton, student, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, has fun with arts and crafts July 19 during Vacation Bible School at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel. The event was part of a week-long program with games and activities teaching kids about the Bible.

[Bottom] Combat Center kids attend Vacation Bible School at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel July 19.

[Left] Brenan Dougherty, 8, son of Maj. Eric Dougherty, infantry team officer, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, rocks out on an inflatable guitar during Vacation Bible School at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel July 19.

**See page B2 for
Sunset Cinema
movie
schedule**



MORE THAN A MEDAL



It's a moment of clarity. Millions of people are cheering, and she can't hear a single one. The only thing she hears is a whisper to herself, "God, please guide my feet to run." She can feel her heart pounding through her chest. She sets, the gun goes off. And then complete silence.

STORY BY **Cpl. Sarah Dietz**

From the desert snow that fell the day she was born in 1982 at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms, to her status as the world's fastest woman in 400 meters, DeeDee Trotter has been extraordinary. Like one in seven billion extraordinary.

"My whole life I knew I was fast," Trotter said. "People saw me running on the court and told me I should do track. I guess it all worked out. I was blessed to be naturally gifted."

Determined to go to the University of Tennessee, her dream became reality with the help of a track scholarship. Though basketball was her first love, Trotter's success on the track earned her scholarships. She left basketball behind.

"It was either come up with \$30,000 or run track. It wasn't that difficult a choice," she said. "My basketball dream had to fade away."

But the commitment paid off, and her running career accelerated. She went professional during her junior year of college, making her the first woman from the school to do so.

Trotter's dedication to maximum performance landed her a world championship in 2003 for the 4x400 meter relay.

She went on to compete in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, winning gold in the women's 4x400 meter relay, and she came in fifth place for the 4,000-meter race.

She became a two-time USA Indoor Champion in 2006 and 2007, defeating top-ranked runner Sanya Richards during the 2007 competition.

That same year, she earned yet another world championship. She was on fire, on top of her game and on top of the world – until 2008.

She suffered a devastating knee injury during the season. While she still attended the 2007 Summer Olympics in Beijing, she didn't make it to the finals. For Trotter, this was the beginning of a painful downhill slope.

"The knee injury was a setback career-wise," she said. "So many things started to unfold after that."

After reconstructive surgery in 2009, Trotter found her inner warrior, donning face paint in her races. She felt the ritual kept her mentally accountable to herself; she didn't have any option other than to give 100 percent every race.

"It's my war paint," she said. "It means I've got to do something. You aren't going to run with that on your face and not show up. It's a way to stay motivated, and I wanted to feel inspired."

Despite her new-found motivation, her body continued to deteriorate. One medical problem after another showed up. She believed it was her body's natural adjustments to compensate for her hurt knee.

"Three years of working my butt off, and I felt like quitting," Trotter said. "I felt like my body couldn't take it. It came to a point, that no matter what I



COURTESY OF DEEDEE TROTTER

Trotter has been training hard at facilities in Florida in preparation for the Olympic Games. She will compete in the 400-meter races scheduled for Aug. 3, 4 and 5.

"The moment of excitement comes and goes. Making the team was exciting, but now that we are preparing to race in the Olympics, we got to get back to business. I'm so in the zone, I can't focus on being excited."

- DEEDEE TROTTER

tried, like rehab and therapy, my body was falling apart. Every year I ran, I kept coming up short."

The injuries were taking their toll. The athlete's will and determination were weakening.

"If I can't run and be good at it, I'm not going to do it," she said. "I can't be once a great runner and not anymore."

Trotter decided to give it one more year of effort, one last chance. Throughout this year, she trained hard. She focused and took second place on the Olympic Trials, earning her a spot on the 2012 Olympic team and a ticket to London.

"I changed," she said. "My personality, demeanor, confidence and spirit were

low. That DeeDee is gone. I overcame my entire career crumbling and made the Olympic Team."

She said that she feels like her recovery has given birth to many more years of running. But she knows there is little time to celebrate. The Olympic Games are right around the corner, and she needs to prepare for battle.

"The moment of excitement comes and goes," Trotter said. "Making the team was exciting, but now that we are preparing to race in the Olympics, we got to get back to business. I'm so in the zone, I can't focus on being excited."

Like any elite warrior, Trotter gathered intelligence and learned about her competi-

tion. She knows it's going to be a challenge.

"We've been running against each other since 2004," she said. "It's been the same group of women. It's not going to be an easy race, but the old DeeDee is back, and I'm making my spot at the top of the list."

Even outside of her own performance, Trotter takes athletics and fair competition seriously. She runs an organization called Test Me I'm Clean, which is focused on promoting athletics free of performance-enhancing drugs. Her passion for the cause came when she overheard a man alleging that all competitive runners use such substances.

"I saw the public was starting to stereotype," Trotter said. "I wanted to defend myself, and I saw kids were taking [performance-enhancing drugs] at an alarming rate."

To help spread awareness and combat the drug trend, the organization adopted wrist bands that bear the organization's name.

"It's a way for an athlete to say 'I'm a pure, clean athlete,'" she said. "It's not so much about the money, but it's an outlet for athletes."

Trotter is also the organization's spokeswoman, which takes her to schools to talk to kids about the dangers of drugs.

"They need to know there are consequences and to take it seriously," Trotter said.

In her travels as a speaker, she has run into humorous situations. Her comical and animated personality makes her a natural candidate for talking to kids. She recorded a rap song as a joke because a group of kids laughed at a spontaneous attempt to rap. Now that spoof has become fairly popular with the kids she talks to.

"I am not a real rapper, it's a comedy reel," Trotter said. "One of my kids asked me about my rap career and he meant my track career. I felt bad for him because the other kids were making fun of him, so I just played along with it."

"I started rapping 'Pass the baton, pass the baton,' and the kids were saying 'Ayyy' in the background. They made me make it a free download," she added.

She started making YouTube videos for the kids, all comical spoofs. She also fields fans' questions submitted by video

comments, such as ones pertaining to her diet and the items on her "bucket list."

"When I race, I can hear a group of kids singing my song, and every time I hear it, I crack up," Trotter said. "I plan to put more time into [the organization] when I'm done racing."

Trotter had been training hard at facilities in Florida in preparation for the Olympic Games and left for London yesterday. You can catch her in action during the 400-meter races scheduled for Aug. 3, 4 and 5.

"It's been a blessing to be able to run like I used to," Trotter said. "Once I saw a retirement, now I'm on to many more years of running."



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.mcsc29palms.com>.

Local Events

Seussical The Musical

When: Every Friday, Saturday & Sunday, June 29 - July 28
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For tickets and information call 316-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

The Sunday Band

Enjoy a live performance from local well-known band
When: 7:30 p.m., Sunday, July 29
Where: Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace
53688 Pioneertown Rd., Pioneertown, Calif.
For more information, call 365-5956.

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.

Lower Desert

Rick Springfield

Australian singer-songwriter performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, July 28
Where: Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Bill Bellamy and Felipe Esparza

The two get together for the Nothing Formal Comedy Show
When: 8 p.m., Saturday July 28
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

ESPN 2 Friday Night Fights

Darley Perez vs. Michael Katsidis
When: 5:30 p.m., Friday, August 10
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Diana Krall

Grammy Award winning jazz pianist and singer performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, August 11
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, July 27

6 p.m. - Men in Black 3, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Rated PG-13
Midnight - Chernobyl Diaries, Rated R

Saturday, July 28

10:30 a.m. - **Free Matinee** Madagascar: Escape to Africa, Rated PG
12:30 p.m. - Madagascar 3, Rated PG
3 p.m. - Madagascar 3 3D, Rated PG
6 p.m. - Snow White and the Huntsman, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Men in Black 3, Rated PG-13
Midnight - Prometheus 3D, Rated R

Sunday, July 29

12:30 p.m. - Madagascar 3, Rated PG
3 p.m. - Rock of Ages, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - Prometheus 3D, Rated R
9 p.m. - That's My Boy, Rated R

Monday, July 30

7 p.m. - Prometheus, Rated R

Tuesday, July 31

7 p.m. - Men in Black 3 3D, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, August 1

2 p.m. - Madagascar 3, Rated PG
6 p.m. - The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Rated PG-13

Thursday, August 2

5:30 p.m. - Men in Black 3, Rated PG-13
8:30 p.m. - Chernobyl Diaries, Rated R

Quirky comedy about '60s child romance is midsummer gem



COURTESY PHOTO

The movies of director Wes Anderson are an acquired taste. The dry humor, quirky rhythms and oddball characters of "The Royal Tenenbaums," "Rushmore," "Fantastic Mr. Fox," and his handful of other films haven't exactly attracted feeding frenzies down at the local multiplex.

NEIL POND

"Moonrise Kingdom"

Starring Bill Murray, Bruce Willis & Edward Norton
Directed by Wes Anderson
94 min., PG-13
Released June 29, 2012

Many fans find Anderson's films refreshing alternatives to the typical paint-by-numbers, populist pablum of the mainstream box office, and they turn out to savor his nonconformist gems when and where they can find them.

Anderson's latest movie, "Moonrise Kingdom," is currently in what Hollywood calls "wide release," meaning that it's playing wide, across the country, after a more modest, "narrow" opening in a smaller number of selected cities. That means more people can find it more easily—

and that the movie studio believes more people will see it given the opportunity.

And see it you should. It is, indeed, a midsummer gem.

"Moonrise Kingdom" is the story of two misfit 12-year-olds, Sam and Suzy (newcomers Kara Hayward and Jared Gilman), who both live on an island off the coast of New England. Sam and Suzy meet in the summer of 1956, fall in love and conspire to run away. But they won't get very far. It's a small island.

Sam goes AWOL from his Scout troop, slicing a hole in his tent to rendezvous with Suzy, who brings along her little brother's battery-operated record player, her cat and a suitcase filled with her favorite girl-fantasy books. They meet in a meadow. Sam shows Suzy their route on his map, offers her some beef jerky, and off they go.

Young love is in the air, but

so is a nasty hurricane. Can Suzy's drifted-apart parents (Bill Murray and Frances McDormand), Sam's Scoutmaster (Edward Norton), and the local police chief (Bruce Willis) find the them before the storm hits?

It's funny, touching, sweet and drenched in '60s nostalgia, but reverberating with distant, haunting echoes of adolescent longing for practically anyone who grew up anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

The whole cast is superb, with Murray, McDormand, Willis and Norton all hitting perfectly coordinated notes of delightfully offbeat, off-centered harmony for their characters and their subplots, a tangled, interconnected mess of grown-up hang-ups.

Harvey Keitel, Jason Schwartzman, Bob Balaban, and Tilda Swinton also make appearances, rounding out the colorful supporting players.

The story unfolds, in carefully calculated increments of chaos and calm, to an eclectic hipster soundtrack of high-lonesome Hank Williams honky-tonk, grand philharmonic classical and even an irresistible dollop of obscure French pop, a song to which Sam and Suzy dance in their underwear on the beach of the secluded inlet that eventually gets rechristened to give the movie its enchanted title.

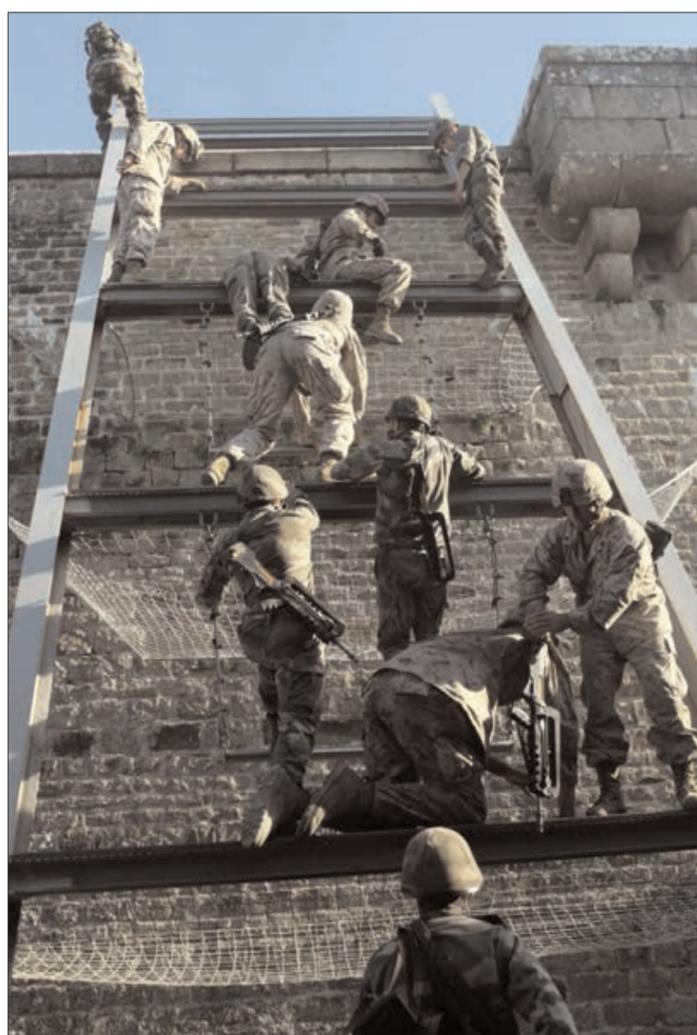
Like other Wes Anderson films, "Moonrise Kingdom" probably won't rival the explosive megabucks exploits of Batman, Spider-Man and other superheroes of contemporary ticket totals. But for viewers who want to escape to a place where a special, much more subtle kind of movie magic gently unfolds, it's like an exhilarating dip in a secret summer cove of cinematic cool.

WeekINPhotos

Global Bonds



PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS A.J. JONES



STAFF SGT. JEMSSY ALVAREZ



PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS EDGARDO LOPEZROSADO

[Left] Petty Officer 1st Class Cedric Taylor observes an SH-60B Seahawk helicopter from Helicopter Anti-submarine Light Squadron remove cargo from the flight deck of the guided-missile destroyer USS Farragut during a vertical replenishment July 21.

[Top, right] Marines with Security Cooperation Task Force Africa Partnership Station 2012 train with French Marines from France's 3rd Marine Brigade on an obstacle course at Fort De Penthièvre, France, July 22.

[Bottom, right] Sailors and Marines aboard landing dock ship USS Fort McHenry man the rails as the ship arrives in Lorient, France, July 20 for a scheduled port visit.



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