



# OBSERVATION POST



August 10, 2012

Since 1957

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## CMA cuts work effort with new technology

**Diane Durden**  
Public Affairs Specialist

Work smarter, not harder is a phrase spoken by Marines everywhere, but for personnel at the Combat Center's Center Magazine Area, it's a phrase they've taken to heart.

They used to document ammunition issued and turned-in by hand, which was time consuming with multiple steps and often prone to errors. They've recently implemented new technology to cut their labor in half. They now use an automated, multi-functional system, named "Ammo Tools 4.0."



DIANE DURDEN

Cpl. Edward Parrish, ammunition technician, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and Cpl. Myralynn De La Paz, ammunition technician, Center Magazine Area, conduct joint ammunition inventory Aug. 7 at Range 400.

It started with an idea to replace a single action, the use of hand-made stencils and spray paint to label ammunition containers.

When customers returned ammunition, the containers needed to be relabeled identifying the ammunition, along with the material condition code and lot numbers.

"When we first started, what we tried to get rid of was doing the spray paint and stencils," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeramy Parham, former officer-in-charge, Center Magazine Area. "That's what drove the initial thought process. We replaced it with printed

See **CMA** page A5

## 'Ride for Heroes' rolls through Combat Center

**Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi**  
Combat Correspondent

The Ride for Heroes team's journey began in St. Augustine, Fla. They have traveled across the southern paths of the United States to their final destination – Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

On July 31, the Ride for Heroes team arrived at the Combat Center on their way to the ocean.

Upon their arrival, the Combat Center showed their support with Marines standing at the gate to greet the tired cyclists.

The following day, the team members were invited back to the Combat Center to get an inside look of an M1A1 Abrams Tank at the 1st Tank



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

The Ride for Heroes team travels down Adobe Road toward the Combat Center July 31 during their cross country trip.

Battalion's tank ramp.

They were able to see the inside of the tracked vehicle as well as get a ride across the unit's ramp.

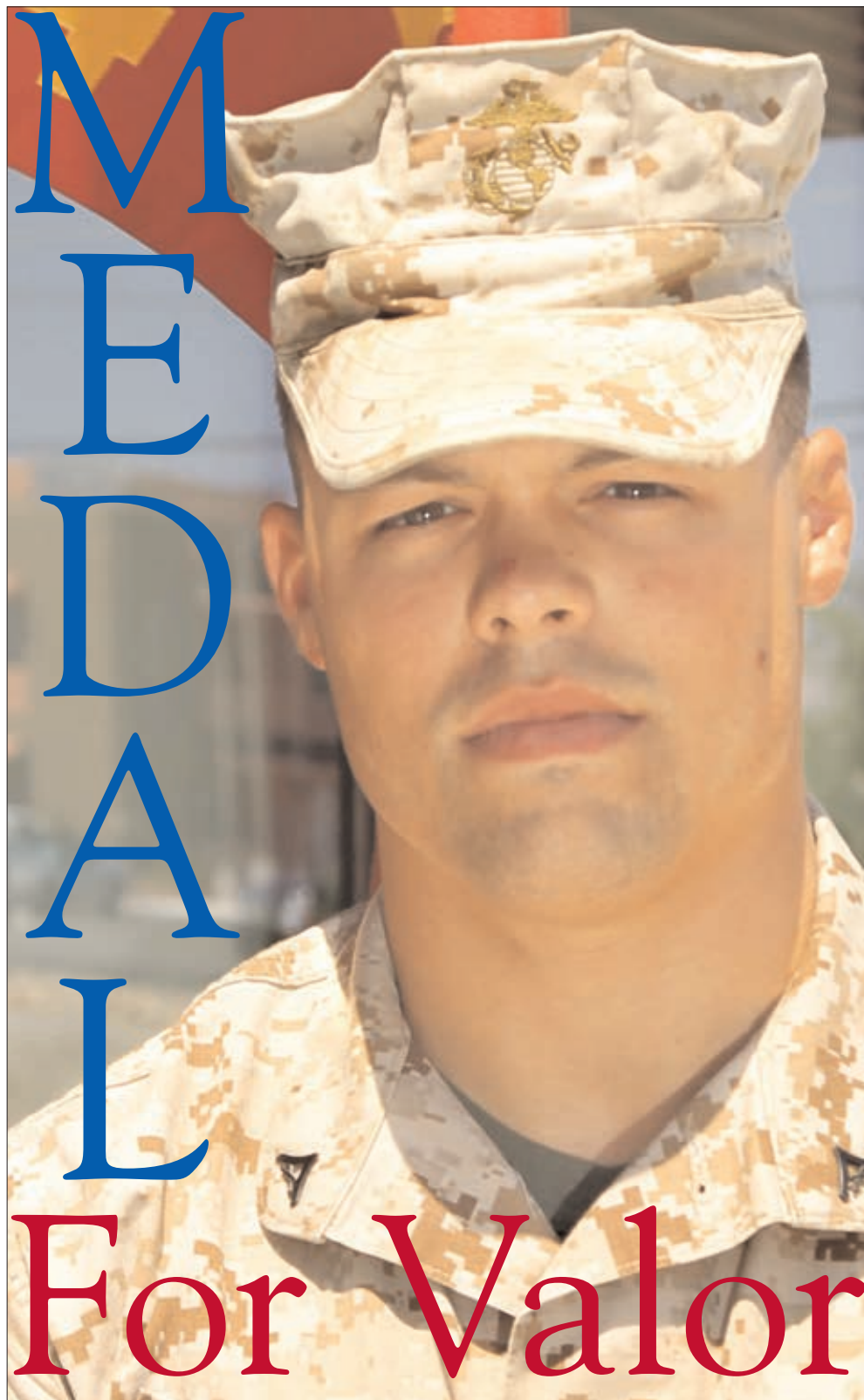
After their tanking experience, the Ride for Heroes team set out for Camp Pendleton, ending their two-month journey.

This team of cyclists has raised approximately \$68,000 for the Semper Fi Fund, during their two month trek through rough weather and terrain on their journey.

The four-man team originally started with two members. John Gerlaugh, a retired Marine, and his brother-in-law, Dennis McLaughlin, had always dreamed about biking across the United States.

During a Semper Fi Fund fundraiser in N.Y., Gerlaugh and McLaughlin became attached to the idea of combining their cross-country tour with a

See **RIDE** page A5



## 'Thundering Third' Marine awarded Bronze Star with 'V'

**Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu**  
Combat Correspondent

**L**ance Cpl. Collin Goldsmith, rifleman, Company I, 3th Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment was awarded a Bronze Star Medal with a combat distinguishing device Aug. 3 during a ceremony at the Combat Center's Sunset Cinema.

Goldsmith earned the award for his actions on June 17, 2011, during the battalion's latest deployment.

Goldsmith was a point-man on a dismounted patrol near the village of South Gavmishi in the Upper Gereshk Valley of Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

threat, Lance Cpl. Goldsmith immediately alerted the rest of the patrol to the danger. Then, without regard for his own safety, he tackled the other Marine exposed to the imminent blast."

"His actions in combat really speaks for his character," said Lt. Col. Jeffery Kenney, battalion commander, 3/4. "It was his instinct to put himself in a position to sacrifice his own safety for somebody else's."

Goldsmith is known among his peers and leadership as a very humble and stellar Marine.

The one aspect of everything that meant the most to Goldsmith had nothing to do with the medal itself. It was his father flying out from York, Pa., to bear witness to the ceremony.

"It was just another day when I found

**“His actions in combat really speaks for his character. It was his instinct to put himself in a position to sacrifice his own safety for somebody else’s.”**

**-Lt. Col. Jeffery Kenney**

On their way to detain a Taliban facilitator, Goldsmith led the way though the village while sweeping for improvised explosive devices. The patrol ran into insurgent activity in an alleyway near the center of the village. An insurgent threw a fragmentation grenade over the wall into the group's path.

"The grenade landed just two meters from the Marines," according to the summary of action listed in the award citation. "Quickly recognizing the

out I was getting the award," said Goldsmith. "I was just happy to see my dad out here. It's always nice to have family support."

Because of Goldsmith's heroic actions, no one sustained serious injuries. Goldsmith was knocked unconscious briefly and returned to full duty one week later.

"There are probably dozens of stories like this one that don't get captured, but fortunately this one did," Kenney said.

## 'Seps, Taps' makeover

**Sgt. Heather Golden**  
Combat Correspondent

The Marine Corps is making sure its members are more ready than ever to transition from the military into a civilian life with a revamped version of its former transition assistance program.

The Transition Readiness Seminar is a three-part program designed to give separating service members exposure to all the tools they need to make sure they are successful once they hang up their uniforms.

**“We thought, ‘We’re not meeting their needs. What can we do?’”**

– Virginia Sulick

"Marine Corps wide, the Personal and Professional Development staff said, 'We're not meeting their needs. What can we do?'" said Virginia Sulick, manager, Combat Center Career Resource Office.

The Core, Pathway Workshops and the Individual Transition Plan fill out the program's three parts. The Core and Pathways are combined into one week of instruction. The ITP is a personal plan for how a service member wants to implement what they learned during the other two portions of TRS. This is where the individual starts seeking the services and resources that are important to him, like the Education Office, the Personal Financial Management Program, the Relocation Office and the Career Resource Office. The ITP is developed throughout the Core and Pathways days.

The Core is required for all service members to attend no less than 90 days prior to exiting active duty. This two-day segment features information for Marines, sailors and their families, and covers employment, relocation, education and training, health and life insurance, finances, Reserve affiliation and veteran's benefits.

Once these days are completed, service members enter one of the four Pathways – College and University, Career and Technical Training, Entrepreneurship, or Employment. Each two and a

**“We were finding out that one size doesn’t fit all; we aren’t all exiting and joining the workforce immediately. We’ve taken the traditional [program] and made it more personal.”**

– Virginia Sulick

half day workshop is designed to give Marines and sailors the skills they need to successfully pursue their chosen paths.

The workshops are conducted by Marine Corps Community Services, contract, state and federal instructors. The only Pathway that is not a Marine Corps-owned course is the Employment Pathway, which is taught by instructors from the Department of Labor's California Employment Development Department.

"The average 22-year-old isn't thinking about what happens afterwards; it's not necessarily where their heads are at," Sulick

See **SEPS** page A5

# This Week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post dated Aug. 8, 2008, Vol. 51 Issue No. 32



By Kurt Schaupner

A violent rainstorm ripped through Twentynine Palms Monday afternoon, closing roads, stranding vehicles, prompting at least one swift-water rescue, knocking out power to hundreds of residents, and flooding downtown apartments and homes throughout the city.

As much as four inches of rain fell in a two-hour period, according to the National Weather Service.

Michael Tree, city manager and director of emergency services for the city of Twentynine Palms, signed a resolution proclaiming the existence of a local emergency. "It's certainly more than a 100-year flood event," Tree said Tuesday.

The Hansen tract got hit really hard, as did the city's north end, Tree said. As of presstime, Adobe Road north of Amboy Road and south of Raymond Way remained closed.

Traffic on the city's main north-south thoroughfare was diverted to Mesquite Springs Road, making it a high priority for city cleanup crews.

Tree said his emergency resolution will go to local, regional and state agencies to facilitate interagency assistance and potential funding resources to offset the cost of cleanup, estimated by the city Public Works Department to be at least \$150,000.

On Tuesday morning, Public Works crews were all over the city, working from a prioritized list to clear streets after the rains. They were getting help from the town of Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County Public Works and from several local construction firms, Tree said.

About an hour into the deluge, at least three vehicles, including a van and an SUV, were stranded on Adobe Road south of Raymond Way when waist-high flood waters raged across the road.

Specifics weren't available, but the Twentynine Palms fire department reported a swift-water rescue in the area at noon.

Another smaller river stopped traffic on Twentynine Palms Highway just west of Utah Trail, which was reported flooded from the highway to Baseline Road.

Twentynine Palms Highway was closed in the Indian Cove area and in front of Copper Mountain College.

Flood-control gates, designed to keep vehicles from crossing flooded washes, were closed at Ocotillo Avenue and elsewhere. The main flood control channel running through Twentynine Palms was flowing as were others. Those roads, and the floodgates, were open by Tuesday.

The storm hit the far west side of Twentynine Palms first, moving east and hitting downtown Twentynine Palms about noon. By 2 p.m. it had moved out

of the city but its aftermath was in full swing, with sherriff's deputies and Citizen Patrol turning motorists away from closed streets.

Large branches were broken from several trees at Luckie Park as well as at homes throughout the city.

Firefighters from the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center lent a hand to Twentynine Palms firefighters. Responding to reports of flooded units at the Sagewood Apartments, TPDFD Capt. Jesse Quinalty said the department received so many storm-related calls that he lost count of the number.

Sheriff's deputies were kept busy both during and after the storm, Services Specialist Anita Baker said.

"We had to go out on a lot of vehicles stuck in the mud," she said.

They also responded to reports of downed power lines, she said, noting that at least five poles remained down Tuesday morning on Utah Trail between Amboy and Valle Vista.

A car on Bullion between Raymond Way and Mesa was stranded between downed lines outside a home. No power line-related injuries were reported, Baker said.

Joshua Tree National Park Chief of Interpretation Joe Zarki said a section of road using fill dirt and the entrance was reopened at 1 p.m. Wednesday.

California Highway Patrol Sgt. Brian Green said the CHP closed Twentynine Palms Highway from Rotary Way in Joshua Tree to Lear Avenue in Twentynine Palms for about two hours on Monday "because of extensive mudslide is at various dirt roads between those two locations."

There were no official detours, Green said, which meant stranded drivers had to wait out the road closure.

"Locals used dirt roads north and south to circumvent the road closures, which we do not recommend and do not condone," Green said.

Many of those drivers, he said were stopped by patrol officers.

"CHP requests that motorists comply with the road closures," he said. "Please do not seek out alternate routes. Wait for the road to reopen. We're doing it for their safety because the road is impassible."

"Any time you close a road and prevent people from getting where they want to go they get upset," he said.

Candace Fritz, executive director of Morongo Basin chapter of the American Red Cross, said the office sent two two-person Disaster Action Teams to the area to assess damages and to help those in need. Red Cross officials, she said responded to four or five requests for service, putting up some families in local motels.

## 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 Twentynine Palms:**  
 - Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.  
 - STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.  
 - K Smoke Shop, 5865A Adobe Rd.

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

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

- 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>

## SUDOKU #2611-D

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

PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

## GETTING DUPED

See answers on page A4

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49					50			51			52	53	54	55
56					57			58						
59					60						61			
62					63								64	

- ACROSS**  
 1. Ankle bones  
 6. Bernhardt or Vaughan  
 11. An NCO  
 14. \_\_\_ Jack (British flag)  
 15. It was acquired by BP  
 16. Make haste  
 17. Indian drum  
 19. \_\_\_-Locka, Florida  
 20. Not saturated  
 21. The ear's "stirrup"  
 23. Cleanse  
 24. Wield, as authority  
 25. Strip bare  
 29. About 3.26 light-years  
 32. Dungeon restraints  
 33. Four-star reviews  
 34. Letters for the Pinafore  
 37. Grackle or grosbeak  
 38. Witches' assembly  
 39. Inside info  
 40. "Told you so!"  
 41. Be indecisive  
 42. Former Oldsmobile
- Cutlass model  
 43. Like matched socks  
 45. Mull over  
 46. Ballplayer's rep  
 48. Comfy room  
 49. Left Bank cash, once  
 51. Just okay  
 56. Romper room habitue  
 57. Top-secret  
 59. Night before  
 60. Went for congers  
 61. Sierra \_\_\_ (African nation)  
 62. Bolshevik  
 63. Unfeeling  
 64. Grand \_\_\_ (Wyoming peak)
- DOWN**  
 1. "Swan Lake" skirt  
 2. Author unknown: Abbr.  
 3. Lens holders  
 4. Explorer Hernando de \_\_\_  
 5. Approaching the center  
 6. Filled completely  
 7. In the thick of  
 8. CD-\_\_\_  
 9. Breezes through  
 10. Twinkies maker  
 11. On the double  
 12. Kilted musician  
 13. Tiniest bit  
 18. "\_\_\_ from Muskogee"  
 22. Bunyan's tool  
 25. Claimant's cry  
 26. Toledo's lake  
 27. Taboo  
 28. Sturm \_\_\_ Drang  
 29. Unlike many country roads
30. State positively  
 31. Cartoon Chihuahua  
 33. Gad about  
 35. "Encore!"  
 36. Work with a pug  
 38. Mercury or Saturn de \_\_\_  
 39. Jesse Ventura victory, once  
 41. Brew makers  
 42. Seek the advice of  
 44. Shakers founder Lee  
 45. South-of-the-border simoleon  
 46. Fairy tale closer  
 47. Lemons' locale  
 48. \_\_\_-longlegs (wispy arachnid)  
 50. Fatty tissue  
 51. Fen-\_\_\_ (withdrawn diet treatment)  
 52. "... sting like \_\_\_"  
 53. Reputation tarnisher  
 54. Lantern-jawed Jay  
 55. Genesis site  
 58. \_\_\_-mo replay

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## 367-3577 For Advertising

## WHAT I'VE LEARNED

## THE GUITAR HERO

**MacKinley Stewart**

Lead guitarist, vocalist for Jalapeño KillSticks  
18, Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**CPL. SARAH DIETZ**  
Aug. 6, 2012

> **I was born in Canada.** People think everyone who lives in Canada lives in ice huts. And we do.  
> **I'm quotable. Everyone quotes me** because I say funny stuff. I'm random. Stuff just comes out of my mouth. I don't think.  
> **I have the hardest time** writing

lyrics. If only I could harness all the stuff I say and put it in a song.

> **My dad walked in** and saw me and my brother playing Rock Band on expert with our guitars behind our heads not looking at the TV. He stared at us for a while and said if we would pick up real instruments we would be in a band already.

> **We are called the Jalapeño KillSticks.** It was named because we were sitting around playing Rock Band and thinking of the most random name ever.

> **We didn't think people would** take us seriously, but it's hard to forget a band name like that.

> **When we started off** it was terrible. Our first songs should never see the light of day. I hope we never get famous so people don't have to hear that.

> **I can never have enough sugar** before a show. The more bouncy and crazy you are, the more people will like it.

> **Me and my drummer, Johnny,** are really musically inclined.

> **Johnny is a better** guitarist than me. The only reason he's the drummer is because he's a better drummer than me, too.

> **What I've learned?** Uh...skip that question for now.

> **I'm extremely** friendly. I'm so caught up in the social aspect of a band. I immediately identify and get along with strange people.

> **I'm a people person, but** people scare the crap out of me.

> **Our first show** I kept my eyes closed.

> **I have a very eclectic taste** in music. Variety is very important. You can draw inspiration from anywhere. One of the most important things to remember as a musician is "Borrow, but don't steal."

> **When we formed** it was just a bunch of friends getting together for fun. I think we started in 2009, but I have to consult the Facebook page because I don't remember.

> **We were hanging out with** a buddy and playing Rock Band, because apparently that's all I do, and he asked what it was like being in a band. Me and my brother looked at each other and said, "It's kind of like not being in a band, except we play instruments." It's a bunch of friends hanging out and playing cover songs.

> **I really like** cover songs. We're not a cover band, but there's something amazing about a song you've always liked and tweaking it a bit to make it your own.

> **We never wanted to start** butting heads. We just wanted to have fun.

> **Back to the "What I've Learned" question?** It's not about the money and popularity. The one gig we did get paid for playing was awesome, but the best feeling is getting up and sounding good and everyone having a good time.

> **I'm a weirdo about** my hair. I brush it out all nice and orderly, then ruffle it around so its presentable, but messy. It's my rockstar look.

> **I'd prefer to make it in music** but computer technician is my fallback.

> **I'm a closet nerd.** Wait, no I came out of the nerd closet a long time ago.

> **I'm a computer technician who wears** glasses with no lenses in them and I play Rock Band all day.

> **The bad thing about smart phones** is you have to be two percent smarter than what you're working with, and they're way more intelligent than I am.

> **I don't remember living in** Canada, but when we visit I do remember Tim Hortons. It's the Canadian version of Starbucks except 10 times better.

> **I'm a coffee addict.**

> **I have no tonsils,** so I drink it really fast.

> **We moved to California because** my mom wanted to "live around her parents for a few years." I've been here for almost 15 years.

> **I live in the shadow of** my family. People know my mom from working on base, my grandpa used to run ACE Hardware in Twentynine Palms, and I look exactly like my older brother. I've had people ask me if he's my dad before.

> **Besides my family I pretty much** have five other people living with me or at my house at all times. It's like we run an orphanage. My mom has such a big heart.

> **I don't read too much** into first impressions. Some of the people I thought were losers at first are my best friends and will do anything for me.



# MENTALLY STRONG PHYSICALLY TOUGH

Single father seeks to better his Marine Corps career

Story and photos by  
**Sgt. Michael Cifuentes**

As if life as a Marine sergeant isn't tough enough, Sgt. Lamont Hicks took on an additional challenge arduous enough to test his mental and physical limits – the Martial Arts Instructor course.

The three-week course is aimed to train Marine leaders to instruct other Marines in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, a staple of the Corps' warfighter ethos.

Hicks, a 24-year-old who serves with the communications section of 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, said he knew the course demanded more than what is expected of him on a day-to-day basis as a platoon sergeant. Typical to a Marine of his rank, he said he welcomed the challenge.

His challenges extend well beyond his duties at work and with his Marines. Hicks is a father of a 4-year-old girl, Lyric, and it's just the two of them living in base housing on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., his duty station.

Before a day in the MAI course begins, he's already faced with obstacles.

On a training day, Hicks rises between 5:00 and 5:30 a.m., giving himself enough time to dress and get ready for the day. Then, he wakes his daughter just before 6:00 a.m. with a subtle whistle, and the morning checklist begins.

"I get her up, make sure she goes to the restroom, brushes her teeth, get her dressed, get her a little snack ready, make sure we have all our things, we head out and I drop her off at daycare," said Hicks, a native of Arlington, Texas.

Although Hicks' demeanor in the mornings sometimes expresses sleepiness or exhaustion, Lyric is always engaged in

youthful conversation. Her eyes are still a bit puffy when he gets her dressed, but she asks her father questions and divides her attention to cartoons on her bedroom TV. He said sometimes he prefers that she's still a little drowsy from the early wake-up in order to minimize any discontent she'll have as he leaves her for the day. But over the course of time the two spent living together, he said Lyric now understands the daily routine.

Because of his priorities at home, Hicks normally catches up with the course just a bit late of start time, which is around 6:30 a.m. for the rest of the class.



Sgt. Lamont Hicks, field radio operator, Headquarters & Service Company, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, carries a mock casualty July 26, during a Martial Arts Instructors course.

From training day one, the course physically tested the 17 Marines who initially stepped up to the challenge. The first two days began with a physical fitness test, a combat fitness test, and sustainment training for tan and grey belt, the first two belts in the MCMAP ladder.

The third day tested more than their knowledge of martial arts and physical

strength. The Marines went through a rigorous combat conditioning exercise where they were met with adverse challenges that came as a mental shock to some.

"The course is designed to push Marines to their limits both mentally and physically," said Staff Sgt. Javier Acosta, a squad instructor with the course and a native of Santa Clarita Valley, Calif. "We wanted to let the Marines know what to expect for the next three weeks. As the course went on, exercises got tougher."

Training kicked off before sunrise every day and usually started with combat condi-

tioning exercises. Before breaking for lunch, Marines were soaked with sweat and grit.

"Break time was a piece of heaven," Hicks said. "But the thought that we had to go back was hard on us. I would be beat after the first half of the day, and I knew the second half was going to be harder."

Capt. Frederick Monday, the chief instructor for the MAI course, said the days were purposely formed to challenge the Marines to the furthest extent.

"We make it mentally and physically challenging to ensure the Marines who'll be instructing other Marines will never quit, and to give them a sense of accomplishment at the end of the course," Monday said.

The course culminated with a 15-mile conditioning hike integrated with free sparring exercises, pugil stick bouts, low crawling through a tear gas-infested dirt road and grappling in a waste-deep ocean pocket off Camp Pendleton's Del Mar beach.

"I thought the day was never going to end," Hicks said. "If they were trying to push us to the brink of mental instability, they did a pretty good job. But it made the whole course worth it in the end."

Surprisingly, Hicks said the hardest part of the course was coming home after a day of martial arts.

"I'm all tired and just want to relax, and a 4-year-old really doesn't understand that," he said. "They just want to play when I still have homework to do, and I have techniques to go over. Honestly, I'd say she had it worse than I did, because to her she doesn't understand why 'daddy won't play' or 'daddy's looking in a book.' So it was pretty tough."

Hicks said he normally puts Lyric to bed at 8:30 p.m., but bedtime for her during the three-week course was moved an hour earlier.

"I put her to bed around 7:30 just so I can have time without having to play a different movie for her, or sing a song with her," Hicks said. "I have that time to sit, relax and pay attention to my homework."

The tenacity of challenges in the course didn't end until graduation was over for the nine Marines who ended up successfully completing. The Marines demonstrated

See **FATHER** page A5

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



SGT. MICHAEL CIFUENTES

Sgt. Lamont Hicks, field radio operator, Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, brushes his 4-year-old daughter's teeth Aug. 3.

#### FATHER, from A4

most of the hand-to-hand combat techniques they learned over the course in front of family members, peers and friends who joined to watch the graduation. The Marines didn't hold back performing all techniques at nearly 100 percent effort.

As he graduated the course, Hicks gained a secondary occupational specialty and is now trained to train Marines in MCMAP.

"We now have nine Marines who know what it means to lead, know how to lead their peers and further develop their junior Marines so that when they move up in rank to be staff noncom-

missioned officers, they'll have a strong NCO corps," said Monday, a native of Burtonsville, Md.

Hicks ventured into the weekend after the course graduated with one mission in mind – to treat himself and his daughter to a weekend of relaxation.

"We stayed up super late that weekend," Hicks said. "Some of the class members even came over to hang out, and my daughter enjoyed the company. We just hung out, relaxed and had a good time."

The challenges of raising his 4-year-old still continue, but he said she makes all of the obstacles he goes through in his career well worth it.

#### RIDE, from A1

fundraiser for the Wounded Warriors.

"For me, this trip is about demonstrating the kind of sacrifice these young Americans made to this nation," McLaughlin said. "They left the security and comfort of their lives to give back to the ever-threatened bank account of freedom."

Troy McLehany, another retired Marine, and Ben Maenza, a medically retired wounded Marine, heard about the trip and couldn't stop themselves from joining.

Maenza, formerly a combat engineer with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, lost both legs due to an explosion of an improvised explosive device during a patrol in Afghanistan.

Even with his injuries, Maenza rode through each state using an adapted cycle that allowed him to pedal and brake with his hands.

The four riders inspired those they met along the way to the west coast to donate what they could. One individual donated \$10,000.

"My goal is to motivate people and let them know that, even when they're faced with tragedies in their lives, determination and a positive attitude can overcome any obstacle," Maenza said.

#### SEPS, from A1

said. "A lot of these Marines just got back from war. The last thing on their minds is, 'I've got to go out, get a job and get on with my life.' If we can pique their interest with one of these four Pathways, that's what it's here for."

Service members can elect to return for any of the other Pathways they did not initially take. They will not be required to attend the Monday and Tuesday Core sessions again, only the "add-on" Pathway.

TRS replaces the Preseparation Brief and supplements the Transition Assistance Program required for all exiting Marines. Combined they were a four-day, one-size-fits-all, "death by PowerPoint" program. The briefs contained well over 450 slides, Sulick said.

A problem was too much of the former course's very limited time was being spent teaching service members things that may not fit into their own plans for their lives after service.

"We were finding out that one size doesn't fit all; service members weren't all exiting and joining the workforce immediately," Sulick said. "TRS takes the traditional [program] and makes it more personal."

Even though it has only been a few months since the Corps implemented the new program, TRS has received an impressive amount of positive feedback.

"We took the first month's evaluations, and over 95 percent of the 29 Palms comments have been

positive," Sulick said. "For any program, that's huge."

Although 90 days prior to exiting the Corps is the minimum required time to schedule a TRS course, Sulick said Marines and sailors should schedule their attendance one year prior to exiting to allow for enough time to fully take advantage of all the tools the service member will learn about and to properly plan for a successful transition. Two years prior is recommended for retiring members.

This isn't the end of the road for TRS, either. It is still a young program. As more service members complete the course and offer their own suggestions, the course can be better molded to what the individual needs and wants.

"We never want to stop growing. It's all in an effort to provide the best program we can," Sulick said.

Sulick mentioned future plans for TRS as it gathers more steam.

"This is the first phase," she said. "Full implementation of the Marine Corps' transition programs will have the individual thinking about their Individual Transition Plan before they even join the Corps, with the recruiter. We want to help them identify their goals. We also want to reach out when for when they get out through the Marine For Life Program. It will be a whole-person approach."

To get more information about the TRS, call the Combat Center's Career Resource Office at 830-7225. You can find more information about TAMP and other recourses for transitioning Marines and sailors at <http://www.usmccs.org/tamp/index.cfm>.

#### Which Pathway is right for me?

**\*College and University Pathway**– This is designed to prepare you for entrance into any public or private university, as well as any two-year community college. The curriculum covers every facet of college preparation, including collegiate terminology, entrance exam requirements, occupational outlook and researching the availability of state and federal financial aid. Through the use of guided activities, mini-workshops and classroom lectures, individuals will be fully prepared for a transition into the college classroom.

**\*Career and Technical Training Pathway**– This Pathway provides training and information as you prepare for employment in a specific job classification, field or industry. Institutions that provide portable training programs will be emphasized. Among other topics, this curriculum covers application processes, application for federal and state aid programs and the development of a career portfolio.

**\*Entrepreneurship Pathway**– Small business ownership can be a satisfying career option, and one that is certainly worth considering. This Pathway reveals a growing number of resources and programs that are available at the federal, state and local levels to support successful entrepreneurship by veterans. Entrepreneurs from the local community will offer their personal insights and business strategies so you can determine if you have the personality and skill set to become your own boss.

**\*Employment Pathway**– Participants will learn how to write effective resumes and cover letters, proper interview techniques and the most current methods for successful job searches. The workshop further provides labor market conditions, assessing your individual skills and competencies and information regarding licensing and certification requirements for various career fields.

#### CMA, from A1

labels you could mass produce."

"When you had a can of ammunition that had been opened, you had to make a tag for it. If you had 50 of those cans and you had to handwrite them out, the accuracy was dependent on the person. Now we have the ability to automate that process. All the tags get printed out the same and they're correct," Parham said.

Creating a database that could be used to pull the information from and generate the labels was just the beginning.

"We started putting it into use in other areas to reduce human error and speed up the process," Parham said.

When issuing ammunition to units, the system generates all the documents including the movement records, the internal documents that track the movement of ammunition to and from the magazines, used by the data section to maintain accurate accounting records within the CMA.

Printed barcodes on the documents are scanned, eliminating the need for manual data entry, significantly reducing input errors.

These same barcodes are used again when units return with their unused ammunition.

Previously, units would have to bring their issue documents with them and CMA personnel would handwrite DD Form 1348s. Now, ammunition technicians simply enter the

Unit Identification Code and document number, or scan the barcode from the issue document. The program populates the information for the turn-in documents, labels and condition code tags.

"This year we've processed 65,000 documents with the new system," said Bill Glover, deputy director, Center Magazine Area. "We have a .04 percent error rate on documentation. I don't think anyone can claim that."

There are 15 stationary Ammo Tools stations set up within CMA's compound and six mobile stations.

The mobile stations, set-up in specially reconfigured vehicles, allow personnel to provide the same service in the field.

The solar powered mobile stations allow CMA personnel to provide support to units at their ammunition holding areas, inventorying, repackaging and labeling of the ammunition, eliminating long waits at the CMA.

Eliminating duplication of efforts and redundancies in procedures has created a working environment that is getting more done with less manpower in less time.

"We've taken a two or three day process for a turn-in and reduced it to a few hours. It's a huge man hour savings," Glover said.

"We're still building on it. When units turn-in their ammo, we will have the capability of creating their expenditure reports based up on the information in the database," Glover said.



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

# Week **IN** Photos

Global Bonds

Photos by Cpl. Joshua Hines

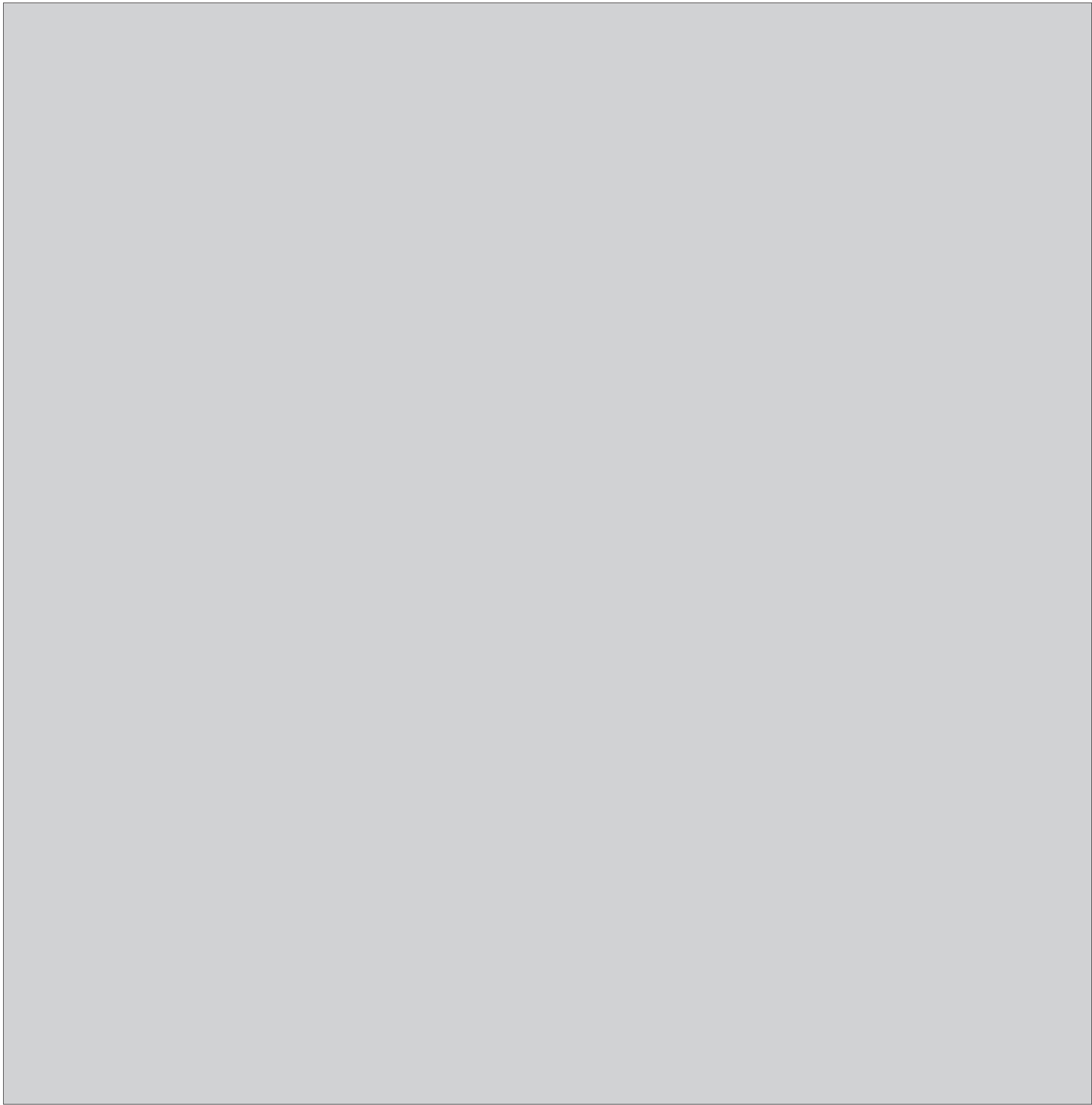


**[Main]** Lance Cpl. Zachary Chivell, ground combat element, Security Cooperation Task Force Africa Partnership Station 2012, grapples with a sailor from Riverine Squadron 3, Detachment 2 July 17 during Marine Corps Martial Arts Program training aboard the USS Fort McHenry.

**[Left, top]** Lance Cpl. Branden Cooper, data specialist, command element, SCTF APS-12, does pushups July 14 during MCMAP training aboard the USS Fort McHenry.

**[Left, bottom]** Lance Cpl. Josh Cramer, ground combat element, SCTF APS-12, practices joint manipulation techniques with a sailor from Riverine Squadron 3, Detachment 2 July 15 during MCMAP training aboard the USS Fort McHenry.

**[Right]** Staff Sgt. Daniel Ahmed, MCMAP instructor with command element, SCTF APS-12, does pushups with Marines July 14 while conducting MCMAP training aboard the USS Fort McHenry.





## Marine Corps battles to prevent suicide

Story by Cpl. Chelsea Flowers

**A**fter Barbara Christianson got off work Jan. 24, she picked up her 4-year-old grandson Nate, ran by the grocery store and McDonald's, then headed home. Christianson's neighbor hated when anyone parked in the street in front of her house, but that day as Christianson pulled into the driveway of her rambler home, she noticed a blue van parked there.

As soon as Christianson parked her truck, her son-in-law came out to unbuckle Nate. He seemed in a hurry and said someone was there to see her and nodded toward the van, where she could make out people inside. Christianson's first thought was that it was the Internal Revenue Service. Then she saw two individuals dressed in green military uniforms get out of the van and begin walking up the driveway toward her.

When Christianson saw their faces, she knew they were there to report her son's death. She kept yelling at them, "Don't tell me my son is dead! Don't tell me my son is dead!"

But her only son was dead – and not from a bullet or an improvised explosive device.

**"My world crumbled that day and it's still not back together. He was my only son. He meant the world to me. I didn't know what went wrong. We made it through Afghanistan. Why now? What happened?"**

**- Barbara Christianson**

Christianson screamed, "No!" and dropped to her knees.

Although Cpl. Gavin Kopponen had returned from Afghanistan months ago and was only months away from completing his time in the Marine Corps, he had taken his life battling the enemies within.

"My world crumbled that day," Christianson said. "And it's still not back together. He was my only son. He meant the world to me. I didn't know what went wrong. We made it through Afghanistan. Why now? What happened?"

When her son came home from his deployment with 2nd Marine Division at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Christianson knew she had lost her little boy and that her son was troubled.

The things Kopponen had done and seen in Afghanistan had changed him – but he refused to talk about it.

"Gavin was tough and never showed his pain to anyone," Christianson said. "He said he would take the (things) he saw in Afghanistan with him to his grave – and he did."

When he did open up to his girlfriend about some of the horrors he saw in Afghanistan, he broke down in tears and his whole body shook. Finally, his girlfriend begged him to stop because she couldn't take it anymore. It troubled him the most at night; he saw the faces of those he killed when he closed his eyes.

Being a Marine had been Kopponen's life goal and, as the end of his active service neared, he didn't know what he was going to do after the Corps. On top of all that, personal problems crippled Kopponen even more. The pain was too much for him. The 25-year-old took his life in his barracks room Jan. 24.

"When I think of Gavin, I hurt because I know the pain he must have felt was incredible," Christianson said. "It was so very bad that he couldn't live with it anymore."

Halfway through its eleventh year of uninterrupted war, the Marine Corps continues to see the negative effects of deployments and other hardships on its Marines and their families. So far this year, 24 Marines have committed suicide and 100 suicide attempts were reported, according to Headquarters Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Program statistics.

But Marines facing stress, whether combat-related or personal in nature, are not alone. Post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries and other mental combat injuries are prevalent among service members returning from deployment. The Marine Corps offers multiple programs such as stress management, family support groups and counseling to help Marines struggling with these stresses get the assistance they need. The key, though, is that these valuable resources can only help the Marines and families who use them.

Help protect yourself and your family by getting

the help you need, before it's too late.

"I couldn't save my son," Christianson said. "But I know what it feels like to have lost him. I don't want any mother to ever feel that pain, so if I can save someone's life, then I would do it in a heartbeat. If I had had a clue that Gavin was going to take his life, I would have driven all night to stop it. I would have done anything to prevent his death. Anything."

**"They say his suffering is over and I believe it is, but my suffering began with the two Marines walking up my driveway."**

**- Barbara Christianson**

As Kopponen's would-have-been 26th birthday on Aug. 9 neared, Christianson, the rest of Kopponen's family, and his girlfriend were left with doubts and questions, as well as haunting guilt that they somehow could have prevented the death of this young Marine.

"They say his suffering is over and I believe it is," Christianson said. "But my suffering began with the two Marines walking up my driveway. Every day is a struggle for me. Life doesn't mean that much to me anymore. I don't enjoy listening to the birds or seeing the sunrise. My sun set on Jan. 24 and it will never rise again. I implore Marines to please get help. Call someone: a friend, a neighbor, or anyone and everyone. Don't give up! There are people who care about you and love you. When you give up, you don't just take your own life, but you take theirs as well."

If you or someone you know is struggling with stress, anxiety or suicidal thoughts, contact the anonymous Marine Corps DSTRESS line at 1-877-476-7734.



SGT. SCOTT SCHMIDT

Post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries and other combat-related stresses are common among service members returning from deployments. The Marine Corps offers multiple programs to help families and Marines cope with these stresses properly.



## 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

### Actress

When: Every Friday, Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 3 - Aug. 12  
Where: Theatre 29  
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.  
For tickets and information call 316-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

### The Record Company

Los Angeles Blues/Rock trio performs  
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Aug. 10  
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

### Heart

Dynamic classic rock female duo performs  
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Aug. 10  
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>.

### ESPN 2 Friday Night Fights

Darley Perez vs. Michael Katsidis  
When: 5:30 p.m., Friday, Aug. 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, Aug. 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>.

### Anjelah Johnson

NFL cheerleader, actress and comedian performs  
When: 8 p.m., Saturday Aug. 25  
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort  
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.  
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

## Sunset Cinema

### Friday, August 10

6 p.m. - Rock of Ages, Rated PG-13  
9 p.m. - That's My Boy, Rated R  
Midnight - Ted, Rated R

### Saturday, August 11

10:30 a.m. - **Free Matinee** Hoodwinked Too, Rated PG  
12:30 p.m. - Brave, Rated PG  
3 p.m. - Madagascar 3 3D, Rated PG  
6 p.m. - Prometheus, Rated R  
9 p.m. - That's My Boy, Rated R  
Midnight - Ted, Rated R

### Sunday, August 12

12:30 p.m. - Brave, Rated PG  
3 p.m. - Amazing Spider Man, Rated PG-13  
6 p.m. - Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter 3D, Rated R  
9 p.m. - Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, Rated R

### Monday, August 13

9 p.m. - Prometheus, Rated R

### Tuesday, August 14

7 p.m. - Amazing Spider Man 3D, Rated PG-13

### Wednesday, August 15

2 p.m. - Rock of Ages, Rated PG-13  
6 p.m. - Ted, Rated R

### Thursday, August 16

5:30 p.m. - Madagascar 3, Rated PG  
8:30 p.m. - Prometheus, Rated R

# Plot thin but dancing impressive in fourth bust-a-move 'Step Up' drama



COURTESY PHOTO

Miami-based group known as "The Mob" stages explosive "flash mob" events hoping to win an online race (and its whopping cash prize) to get 10 million YouTube views of their video-uploaded exploits. They dance on top of cars at Miami's tourist-packed Riverwalk, down the escalator of a downtown corporate complex, across the tabletop of a ritzy restaurant, and throughout a tony art museum, always attracting the oohs and ahhs of onlookers but hot-footing away a few beats ahead of police and security guards.

## NEIL POND

### "Step Up Revolution"

Kathryn McCormick, Ryan Guzman & Peter Gallagher  
Directed by Scott Speer  
99 min., PG-13  
Released July 27, 2012

"Calling out around the world, are you ready for a brand new beat?" goes a classic '60s Motown hit. "Summer's here and the time is right for dancing in the street."

Fifty years later, they're still dancing in the street—and just about everywhere else, too. At least it's that way in "Step Up Revolution," the fourth in the popular series of bust-a-move dance dramas about good-looking young movers and groovers who just don't feel like they're living unless they're out there breakin', lockin' and poppin'.

And as for the "brand new beat," it's shuffled a few miles down the road from Motown, and it might sound new, indeed, if your ears haven't quite acclimated to the bass-heavy, woofer-rattling sounds of Busta Rhymes, Twista, Redfoo, Timbaland, Diplo, Flo Rida, Lil Jon, Yelawolf and the other hip-hop, contempo-

rary pop and dance-hit artists that populate the practically nonstop soundtrack.

Plot, you ask? Well, there is one, but it's basically a shoe-string to hold together the elaborate dance numbers—which are, admittedly, quite spectacular. The story is woven around a Miami-based group known as "The Mob" that stages explosive "flash mob" events hoping to win an online race (and its whopping cash prize) to get 10 million YouTube views of their video-uploaded exploits.

They dance on top of cars at Miami's tourist-packed Riverwalk, down the escalator of a downtown corporate complex, across the tabletop of a ritzy restaurant, and throughout a tony art museum, always attracting the oohs and ahhs of onlookers but hot-footing away a few beats ahead of police and security guards.

But things heat up even more when a beautiful, formally-trained female dancer (Kathryn McCormick) enters the picture, falls in love with the Mob's hunkiest hooper (Ryan Guzman)—and turns out to be the daughter of the wealthy hotel tycoon (Peter Gallagher) who wants to tear down the dance crew's funky bayside neighborhood and

transform it into Miami's next retail mecca.

The Mob doesn't take that kind of news sitting down, and soon their performances become protests to make their voices heard above the din of the dollar signs.

The acting won't win any awards—mainly because "acting" is in short supply and dancers outnumber actors by a ratio of about 20:1. Gallagher, a veteran of dozens of movies and TV shows, does a commendable job as the lone pillar of dramatic experience in the swirl of music and movement.

It's easy to slam a movie like this as just another piece of pop bubblegum. But there's more to it that, especially for anyone who can appreciate the intense, professional work that goes into planning, choreographing, rehearsing and executing such complex, intensely aerobic, athletic, even airborne maneuvers, which may surprise some viewers in their wide incorporation of styles.

There's just about every urban street move you might imagine—as you might imagine. But there's also a range of modern, classical and even Cirque de Soleil-inspired routines. Anyone who loves watching

any kind of dance (and, based on the popularity of the TV shows "So You Think You Can Dance" and "Dancing With The Stars," there are a few of you who do) will find something to appreciate and admire.

And one thing to appreciate and admire could be actress McCormick, who plays Emily, the dancer with classical training who wants to widen her repertoire by joining The Mob. McCormick is an alum of the 2007 season of "So You Think You Can Dance," where she placed third and received the most fan votes of any female contestant in the finale. Several other former contestants, judges and choreographers from the hit TV competition, now going into its ninth season, also appear in the movie, or were otherwise involved with it.

So you may not think YOU can dance—at least not like this. But it IS summertime, and you know what that means. If you're not going to be hitting the streets yourself, at least give these dance-crazy kids a chance to show off their considerable chops. You'll be impressed, entertained, and all but certainly wowed...even if you're more familiar with the Yellow Pages than Yelawolf.



# Reading & A Movie

Combat Center kids enjoy final day of Summer Reading Program



**[Above, left]** Lilly Abelson, 5, daughter of Capt. Pete Abelson, company commander, Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, reads a book Aug. 3 at the last meeting of the Lifelong Learning Library's Summer Reading Program.

**[Above, right]** Trey Abelson, 2, son of Capt. Pete Abelson, company commander, H&S Co., 3rd LAR, eats popcorn while watching "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs," Aug. 3 at the last meeting of the Lifelong Learning Library's Summer Reading Program.

**[Right]** Combat Center kids play a game of Crazy Soup Aug. 3 at the last meeting of the Lifelong Learning Library's Summer Reading Program.



**Photos by**  
Lance Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimilis

 Visit the official MCAGCC facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>

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 The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at <http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>