



OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS

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August 31, 2012

Vol. 55 Issue 29

60 YEARS

Combat Center anniversary celebrated with ceremony

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

The month of August marked six decades of service for the Combat Center.

On Aug. 24, the Combat Center celebrated the event at the installation's Sunset Cinema.

The rows of seats spanning the large theater were filled with active duty and retired Marines who have served throughout the 60 years the Combat Center has been in service.

These VIPs were some of the first Marines to arrive at the Combat Center and helped build it from the ground up. They were first to set up shop in the desolate desert and set the foundation for what would one day become the premier combined arms training facility in the Marine Corps.

The honored guests were given front row seats to the ceremony, including the 20-minute Combat Center 60th Anniversary



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Brig. Gen. George W. Smith, Combat Center Commanding General, and Sgt. Maj. Matthew Brookshire, Combat Center Sergeant Major, attach battle streamers onto the base's organizational colors during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Combat Center Aug. 24.

video, featuring several of them.

Preceding the video presentation was an invocation, colors re-dedication and remarks by Brig. Gen. George W. Smith, Commanding General, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.

Smith spoke to the Marines and veterans in the crowd about his pride in the Combat Center and the Marines stationed there.

"I can only imagine what the future holds for the next 60 years," Smith said.

Since its early beginnings in 1952, the base has grown to be the largest in the Marine Corps.

Its reputation as the nation's premier pre-deployment training center has been spread throughout not just the Corps, but the world.

Militaries across various nations have gone to great lengths to travel to Twentynine Palms to use the unique training

See **ANNIVERSARY**, page A4

One of our own

Story by
Sgt. Heather Golden

Love in war

When you've practically lost yourself to a wartime attack, been set on fire, clawed yourself free of wreckage without all your limbs intact, your face, arms, legs, even your eyelids are burned away, and you have no idea how you lived through all this, you can't just come home. This was what retired Cpl. Anthony Villarreal's life is going to be like after a hidden pressure plate in Helmand province, Afghanistan, blew apart his vehicle June 20, 2008, with him still inside it. At the time, Anthony was deployed with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

Normalcy doesn't mean what it once did. But luckily for Anthony Villarreal, normalcy does mean coming home to a loving wife, one who stayed despite the trials she knew they'd face. It's been four years since the attack that almost cost him his life. This is his story. As told by her.

(Part 2)

Five years ago

The first few days after they were married, as impulsive as it was, Jessica said they knew they hadn't made a mistake. They "were inseparable" and had an "on-top-of-the-world kind of feeling," she said.

They immediately started spreading the good news. Their families' feelings were mixed.

"We got every reaction in the book. Negative and positive," Jessica said. "Anthony called his mother right away as we were walking out of the courthouse. She disagreed with us getting married so young. My family, on the other hand, was overwhelmed with joy. My family supported our relationship right from the beginning.

"It was something Anthony and I leaned on, those blessings from my side of the family," she said.

Two months later, Jessica moved back to California. The move was easier than expected. They had already been planning on her possibly moving in with Anthony soon. And, of course, they had each other.

"Anthony put it like this to encourage me. He said he would take care of me, and he wanted me close so nothing bad would ever happen to me. He loved me."

Their timing in applying for base housing couldn't have been more perfect.

"Normally the wait is six-to-eight months," she said.

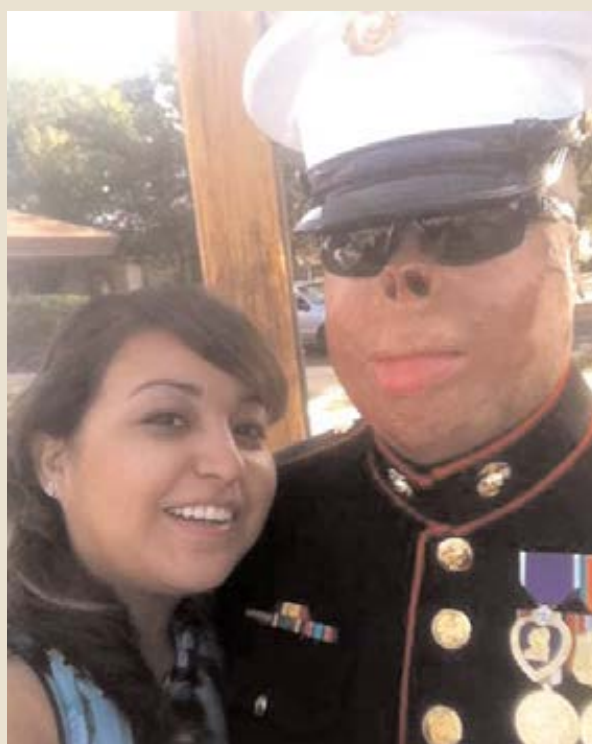
Anthony was somehow blessed with a one-month wait.

"I guess it was meant to be," Anthony said.

However, the adjustment to married life was not as easy, especially for Anthony. He had a hard time accepting they'd have to be a team, that he couldn't be the knight in shining armor he wanted to be for Jessica.

"He couldn't afford his phone bill, but said he needed one so that his command could keep in contact with him. Once he told me that, I went job hunting," she said. "Responsibility was like an instinct for me. I was going to take care of this man, no matter what.

"Finances was something he had trouble communicating



COURTESY PHOTO

Retired Cpl. Anthony Villarreal and his wife, Jessica, smile outside of their home in Lubbock, Texas, in 2011. Anthony was injured in Afghanistan in 2008 when his vehicle ran over an improvised explosive device.

with me. He did not want me to have a worry in the world. I told him it wasn't fair to carry it all on his shoulders, which he did frequently. He finally spilled the beans about being behind on his truck payment. Once I got my first paycheck, we started to catch up on payments as much as we could. It was difficult at times."

However, these first trials also showed the couple they weren't alone. A few friends saw a need, and stepped in.

"A few times we did not even have money for groceries. Thank God for Anthony's former (barracks) roommate," she said. "Oscar Garza, without hesitation, said, 'I'll help.' Of course, it took a hard hit toward Anthony's pride, having to ask for help.

"I was blessed to meet up with one of my boot camp buddies, Rebecca Darling-Lopes. After a while, she

found out we didn't have any furniture. She gave us a couch that wouldn't fit in her off-base house. A couple of days passed, and Oscar asked if it was okay to put some things from his room in the barracks in our house. He said we could use his television set, his stand, his Wii and his games as long as we took care of it."

Despite the hardships, Jessica still described those early first days together as "blissful."

"We had each other, and that is all we needed."

They spent those days "working on communication, taking turns cooking and helping each other clean the house," she said.

They were both well aware of the inevitable separations they'd have to face within a military marriage. They had already stayed together through Anthony's second deployment and through a long-distance dating relationship. Anthony enlisted help in the form of a new four-legged friend for Jessica. They rescued an abused 6-month-old beagle puppy to keep Jessica company when the Marine Corps pulled Anthony away.

Their first major separation after she moved to California

See **LOVE**, page A4

Dynamic training for 'Thundering Third'

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, conducted a series of exercises at Noble Pass and Delta training areas Aug. 23, as part of the unit's squad certifications.

The week-long squad certifications reinforced the squad-sized units in their tactical skills and efficiency in a combat scenario.

"We're training to be an aggressive unit," said Sgt. Maj. Michael Miller, battalion sergeant major, 3/4. "We're using a crawl, walk, run method. Marines are learning what they're supposed to be doing and, coming from the other side, we have them getting these good critiques by the Staff NCO (Noncommissioned Officers) and officers."

Each company was divided into separate training areas, conducting different exercises, rotating through the training areas during the following days. These exercises tested Marines on a spectrum of infantry skills. They were evaluated on their abilities to react to contact with the enemy.

Squad leaders were kept under a thoroughly, watchful eye as they were challenged to lead their Marines and accomplish their mission.

"It's a heavy responsibility," said Lance Cpl. Moses D. Munoz, squad leader, 3rd Platoon, Company K, 3/4. "You want to always be a leader who can lead from the front and I'll never give my Marines a command I wouldn't be willing to follow."

Munoz led his squad through multiple rounds of squad



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

Cpl. Alex Naumovich, rifleman, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, sweeps through an improvised explosive device course filled with simulated IEDs Aug. 23 at the Noble Pass training area.

sized attacks on a known machine gun bunker. The Marines collaborated a support by fire position with an assault element to advance to and eliminate their objective.

The Marines were able to complete the course with great efficiency by using fire and maneuver as well as the use of an AT-4 and Shoulder-launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon.

"We have a saying," Munoz said after finishing the exercise. "The more you sweat here, the less you bleed in war."

Co. L Marines navigated their way through an improvised explosive device course at Noble Pass training area. The course was filled with multiple simulated IEDs.

The Marines used sweeping techniques to move through the course. They took careful steps through the rocky passage and kept a sharp eye out for any possible clues that could lead

See **QUALIFICATION**, page A4

Political do's, don'ts

Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu
Combat Correspondent

During this election season there are things that active duty service members need to know to stay out of trouble when showing support for a political party.

Service members and federal civilian employees are encouraged to register and to vote. The Federal Voting Assistance Program helps facilitate the voting process.

However, active duty military and federal civilian employees cannot take part in partisan political activities.

As defined by Department of Defense Directive 1344.10, "political activities by members of the armed forces may not be permitted to engage in campaign or election based activities while on a United States military installation."

All of this is to avoid giving the appearance of DOD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of any political party.

The DOD has a longstanding and well-defined policy regarding political campaigns and elections to avoid the perception of DOD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of any political candidate, campaign or cause. The DOD encourages and actively supports its personnel in their civic obligation to vote, but makes it clear that members of the Armed Forces on active duty should not engage in partisan political activities to avoid perception, according to DOD Directive 1134.10.

See **POLITICS**, page A4



August 29, 2012

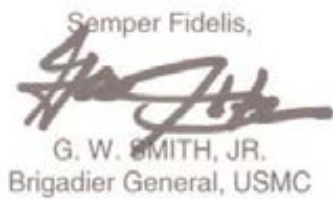
To Marines, Sailors, Civilians and Family Members of the Combat Center,

First let me say how truly grateful I am to all members of our Combat Center Community for your ongoing efforts to markedly reduce the level of mishaps, both on and off-duty, aboard the Combat Center. While we have specialists whose singular focus is workplace and training safety, it takes everyone's constant vigilance to ensure that a culture of safety permeates all aspects of our lives, particularly as we approach another long holiday weekend.

It has been my experience both in combat operations and here in the relative safety of the United States that negative things always seem to present themselves when you are least attentive. It is human nature to allow our safety focus to blur a bit as we plan to enjoy the Labor Day holiday with family and friends, often including lengthy travel and a host of recreational activities. Yet, our collective responsibility is to remain "in the yellow" within the Cooper Color Code — a relaxed alertness and a continual awareness of your surroundings — for our own safety but also for that of our families, friends and fellow citizens. You cannot go too far astray if your fundamental planning assumption is that your fellow motorist, boater, or basic recreationist is not as aware of their surroundings as you.

Labor Day marks the conclusion of a precarious period every year, the end of the 101 Critical Days of Summer. We say time and again that people are our most precious resource — let us ensure that our actions match our words! I encourage all members of our community, and particularly leaders at every level, to redouble your efforts to ensure that all available safety resources are utilized and the holiday plans of every individual are reviewed and thoroughly understood. To do anything less does those in our charge a disservice.

Again, thank you for your continued vigilance and best wishes for a most enjoyable and safe holiday weekend!



Bike safety saves lives

Live to ride, not ride to die

Frank Santiago
MAGTFTC Safety Division

Perhaps there are some misunderstandings on the importance of safe motorcycling.

I am at a loss when I see our riders doing what they clearly know they shouldn't be doing. They know the difference between right and wrong, and our riders certainly know the risks associated with riding. So, I wonder why there are still riders being selfish and performing self-destructive acts on motorcycles.

After all, motorcycling is supposed to be fun, right? The correct answer would be "yes." Riding a bike can be an extremely enjoyable venture.

For many, riding is a means to commute and save gas. For others, it's much more. It can be a personal therapy. It can be a way to see the world differently. It can be a way of social bonding. For a few, it's a way of life. But having fun doesn't mean we treat our machines as if they were toys.

Never have I purchased a motorcycle that came in a small box that read "Contains small parts. For ages 8+." Every warning label I've ever read on motorcycles has always said "May cause serious injury or death." Wouldn't this be clear enough for those who operate one? You would assume. But insane risks are made while riding every day. Why is it so hard to understand that the roadway is not our game board, the throttle is not a dice roll and other vehicles are not our opposition?

It's simple. Every morning I swing my leg over the saddle, I think, "This could be the day I don't come home." And many riders think the same thing before mounting their bikes. This type of thinking keeps us alert, safe and most importantly, alive.

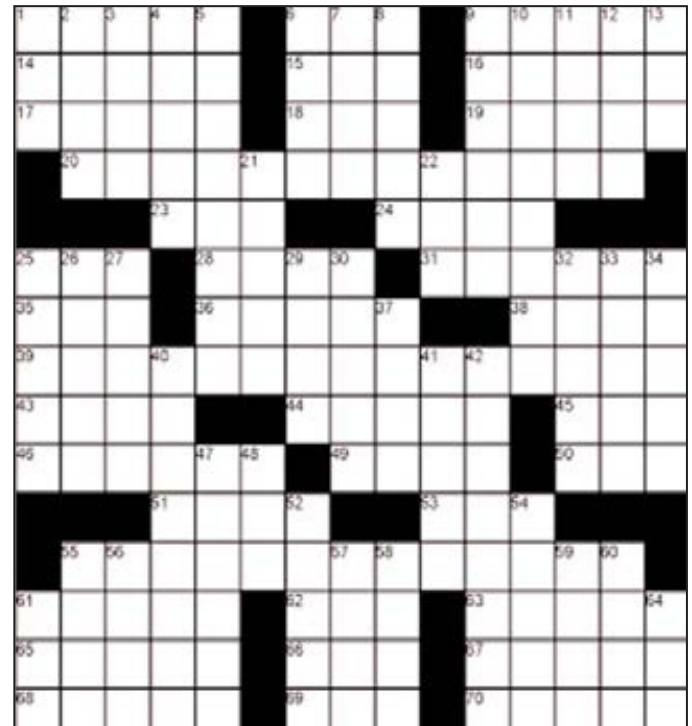
Unfortunately, there are too many of those riders with the "won't happen to me" mentality. These riders push themselves far beyond their skill levels, display bad judgment and wear their gear inappropriately. All of us at Safety Division see this type of disregard for safety daily and can only hope these riders make it to their destination and live long enough to figure it out.

There isn't much luck involved in motorcycling. But if you don't care, then even luck won't help you.

When riding we need to respect our bikes, others and most importantly, ourselves. If you are making a game out of it, you may never get to play again.

Have fun when you ride and take pleasure in all that is motorcycling. But never forget that your bike is not a toy and always ride to live.

NAMESAKES, KINDA



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

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



ACROSS

1. HCl and HF
6. Help a checker
9. Noodlehead
14. ___ Dame
15. "___ Gang"
16. Grab the tab
17. Best possible
18. Hurler's stat
19. Do a double take, e.g.
20. Two Erics
23. Poseidon's realm
24. Deliberate loss
25. Refueling area
28. Study at the last minute
31. Suppressed, as emotions
35. Sacagawea denomination
36. A dwarf planet
38. Tubular fare
39. Two Eriks

DOWN

1. Singer DiFranco
2. Closing passage
3. Tabloid twosome
4. Dull colors
5. Connie of "Hotel"
6. Dutch South African
7. Subtle glow
8. Long piano
9. Try hard
10. Piece of office furniture
11. Make well
12. Mugger's faceful
13. Mel in Cooperstown
21. Dog-___ (well-worn)
22. Quick swim
25. Yeats and Keats
26. Map within a map
27. One more than tri-
29. Burnoose wearer
30. Three squares
32. Atlas was one

33. Of value
34. Michelangelo masterpiece
37. Ginger cookie
40. Hearty hunk of meat
41. Mild maledictions
42. Offers for dinner
47. Subsidiary theorems
48. Street of nightmares
52. Big Three summit site
54. Playing marble
55. On the house
56. Jaffe or Barrett
57. At hand
58. Bogarde of film
59. They try harder
60. It may be picked
61. Gordon Brown, Tony Blair et al. Abbr.
64. "Whoopce!"

OBSERVATION POST

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 See answers on page A3

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Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at <http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>.



Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE OFF-ROADER

Gunnery Sgt. Michael Lamar

Assistant Command Inspector General,
Age 36, Claytonville, Ill.

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
LANCE CPL. D. J. WU
August 28, 2012

> **Off-roading is** kind of my passion. I love all things motor sports, but off-roading is my niche.

> **My son loves it.** Every time he sees a dirty vehicle he's like, "Daddy, Daddy, lets go Jeeping. Lets go drive on mud."

> **My daughter enjoys the time,** because sometimes I go one-on-one with the kids. So it's just me and her and she enjoys more of the Daddy time. I love to take the whole family most of the time.

> **On family trips** we go out to Big Bear or Ocotillo Wells. I've been out to Johnson Valley, but those are solo trips. There's a little more risk with a lot more rocks.

> **There was one time** we went to Croatan National Forest (in North Carolina) and it was the fourth or fifth time I had taken my wife out with me. It had been raining hard for like a week. We got stuck at an angle so the guys we were with pulled us out. Then we almost immediately got stuck again, but this time on her side. Water started coming in on her side and she started freaking out. She was like, "We're gonna drown." And I'm like, "Just get out and stand up. It's gonna be OK."

> **Probably one out of every five times** that I go wheeling, I'll break something. She's like, "Every time you go out you'll break something."

> **Every wife** that I've talked to is the same way. It's kinda comical when she says, "Why do you have to break (stuff)?"

> **I was a Chevy guy** for most of the time I was off-roading. But I got my first Jeep in 2007. My buddies were like, "You know what Jeep stands for, right?" I said "Ha ha, what's the joke?" They said, "Yeah, it stands for Just Empty Every Pocket."

> **I didn't realize it at the time,** but it's been five years and I'm on my second Jeep. It's been so expensive.

> **I've sunk thousands of dollars** in off-roading parts. Whether it was something broke that I had to fix or it was something I wanted to upgrade and the price tag of the Jeep. You can see how it can spiral out of control.

> **I don't understand how some guys can** spend \$8,000 on their Jeep and still take it off-roading.

> **I've learned over the years** to rely on my own work and that has saved me a ton. That's the trick, being frugal and pacing myself as much as I can. The biggest place I've saved money is in doing my own labor.

> **It's not about how much money** you put into it. You could buy a \$500 truck and still have as much fun as a guy that has \$50,000 in his rig.

> **Someday I hope to come back** here and race King of the Hammers myself, with my own equipment.

> **Being a part of one of the pit teams** was so different. It was great working on a race car, a high-end, high-speed vehicle. Doing the pit service, it wasn't NASCAR, but time was important. Get him in, get him out on the road.

> **Working with the Poison Spyder** crew was awesome. The experience I got, being able to pit for Poison Spyder was phenomenal.

> **You don't get to see** much of the race, at least not as much as I thought I might.

> **We started a Club 29 Off-Road** last year. We try to have monthly meetings, meet-and-greets and a trail ride every month. That hasn't worked out really well, just because of everyone's schedules.

> **It's a lifestyle,** it really is. It does something for the soul, to be out in the woods away from the e-mails and the phone.



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LOVE, from A1

was Anthony's month-long Enhanced Mojave Viper cycle.

"We talked to each other on the phone as often as was allowed. He said he could see the light flickering as I turned off and on the light switch from the front porch. He was in the hills somewhere. He was just happy that I was closer to him."

Jessica used that month away from Anthony as a chance to make friends with the other wives in Anthony's unit. These relationships would later help her through the turmoil of living through his injury.

Jessica described this time apart as practice for Anthony's upcoming deployment, although she admitted there was really nothing that could really prepare her for those months.

Four years ago

"It was the beginning of April 2008 when he deployed," she said. "He prepared his sea bags the night before, set our alarms and woke up super early, as always."

That was the start of their final hours together before he left for Afghanistan. It was his third deployment, and their first as a married couple. They had been married less than a year.

Once at the unit's meeting point, they walked around for an hour, greeting other families. Jessica said she repeated the names of the other Marines in her head over and over in an attempt to match names to faces. She remembered hearing other families say "see you later" instead of "goodbyes" and being saddened by the realization that some of those families would lose their sons and husbands and brothers before the unit came home.

The final hour before the buses were scheduled to arrive, Anthony and Jessica sat in their truck just being together.

"We had a lot to talk about," she said. "I asked him how long the deployment will be, me already knowing the answer. He responded anyway. We held each other most of the time, our hands intertwined, staring at the barracks and cars and families."

The two had weathered Anthony's second deployment when they were still dating. But Jessica said this one was more real because this was the first time she was there to see him off.

"Seeing the white buses arrive, my

heart sank. This was it. Soon someone would knock on the window and say, 'Time to go.' I remember it being chilly. The wind was blowing, which made it extra cold. Families stood in a group waving, some holding onto outstretched arms, trying to get that last touch."

The next day was quiet. Jessica called her mom to tell her Anthony was gone. The morning after that, Jessica picked up her older sister, Renel, from the airport. She said goodbye to all her Marine wife friends, and Jessica and Renel drove back to Texas together.

"I had never been by myself. I was

night I prayed. I even went as far as sending my guardian angel over to him, to protect him."

They talked "a little here and there" on their newly-created Facebook account and wrote often. She used MotoMail whenever she could get to a computer because the letters would reach Anthony quicker than traditional post.

"I remember writing to him saying 'Happy Birthday love. One month passed.' I still continued to write to him. Nothing beats a handwritten letter. I even attempted to spray the paper with my perfume and made my own confetti. I always put tape to secure it. He told me how hot it got over there, and I was not confident the envelope glue would stick through those temperatures.

She signed her letters "With love, Wawow's Princess," referring to a nickname Anthony's Marine friends had given him. She said Anthony always called her his princess.

Frequent care packages were another way she sent her love.

"I would spend a portion of my paycheck all on sending packages. I would send big, family-size cans of beans and Fritos, beef jerky. For his birthday and Easter, I sent him a piñata chick hatching from an egg, stuffed with candy. He asked for pictures of us so he could hang them up, baby wipes, socks, candy and canned fruit."

The two tried to keep the routines they'd started earlier in their marriage alive, as much as Anthony's access to phones or the Internet would allow.

"We would sing our favorite songs, and when it was nighttime, he would sing me to sleep," she said. "Praying together was a big deal for me, so we often prayed over the phone.

"Any time he could get to a computer with reliable signal he would phone me. It was not often enough. He called once a month."

As it happened, the two only shared two phone calls before Jessica got a very different phone call in June 2008, this time from someone in Quantico, Va., telling her Anthony was badly injured and coming home.

Editor's Note: This is the second in a three-part series about a wounded veteran and his wife. Check back next week in the *Observation Post* for the last installment of *Anthony and Jessica's story*.



COURTESY PHOTO

Retired Cpl. Anthony Villarreal holds a piñata his wife, Jessica, sent him during his third and final deployment. Less than two months later his vehicle ran over an improvised explosive device.

always with my mom or Anthony. It was a scary thought being in California by myself. I decided to visit my dad in San Antonio for the duration of the summer. I was planning on coming back to Lubbock to start college."

Neither anticipated Anthony's very early return home a few short months later, after his injury.

"God sure had a completely different path for me that year, one that would change our lives and my family's lives forever," she said.

Once back in her childhood home, Jessica kept busy with a job at an Academy sporting goods store and devised ways to stay close to Anthony. She described the experience "like school was out, the summer started and we did not get to see much of each other anymore."

"I always felt an emptiness in my heart. I was missing him every day. Every

POLITICS, from A1

None of this prohibits the free discussion about political issues or candidates for public office. But there are certain things that active duty military members can't do.

All members of the Armed Forces, including active duty, reserve and retired members are prohibited from wearing military uniforms at political campaigns or election events. This is stated in all DOD branches' uniform regulations.

Some other examples of prohibited political activities include campaigning for candidates, soliciting contributions and marching in a partisan parade. A full list of prohibited activities is listed in DOD Directive 1344.10.

All of these restrictions apply to social media forums as well. While you are allowed to express your personal view, the same restrictions apply online as they do in the real world. An active duty service member can not engage in any partisan political activity, even online. Service members cannot post or link to a political party, candidate, campaign, group or cause. It is considered equivalent to distributing literature on behalf of those entities or individuals, according to DOD Directive 1344.10.

If a social media site user is identified as an active duty member, on their site, all political based entries must prominently state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the DOD.

QUALIFICATION, from A1

to discovery of a possible IED.

The course emphasized both how to spot IEDs and how to react to one once it's been found.

The Marines were instructed to follow the route the enemy wouldn't expect them to take and if they found an enemy device, to use the terrain to their advantage and put something between themselves and the IED.

The 'Thundering Third' also received combat life saving classes and an alternative method of locating potential terrorists in addition to their time running through squad-sized attacks and IED courses.

Former law enforcement authorities with experience in criminal networking organizations, which have a strong resemblance to terrorist networks of the current enemy networks such as the Taliban, taught Marines proper searching procedures and handling of evidence.

These procedures have been proven to uncover individuals in terrorist organizations and helped save lives just by the uncovering of a data storage device or logging of a fingerprint.

The skills acquired through the squad certifications are essential in the squad-sized units. Greater proficiency in these skills, as well as the squad leader's ability to lead his Marines, conveys greater effectiveness of the platoon and company-sized elements.

"3rd Battalion, 4th Marines has a long line of illustrious individuals," said Miller. "And these Marines have been doing outstanding."

The Marines proved themselves to be skilled in their abilities as infantrymen, leaders and as a team with the completion of their squad certification, Saturday.

ANNIVERSARY, from A1

environment the Combat Center provides.

There are presently approximately 14,000 permanently stationed service members aboard the Combat Center.

This "crown jewel" of the Marine Corps will continue to prepare Marines and other service members for any conflicts that may lie ahead.

Then & Now

Story By
Gunnery Sgt. Leo A. Salinas

Back in my day. When I was young.....

Say it and immediately someone's eyes are going to roll. People love saying those words as much as people hate hearing them, but it's true. Kids are going (or already have gone) back to school and with that comes new shoes, new supplies and a new grade. A step up, even if you graduate from first to second grade; picking your nose to learning why not to pick your nose. Then in third grade, you take a science class where they tell you what's in your nose. Having kids at the beginning of the school year is just as exciting for you as it is for them. From my understanding, school today is a bit different because of the following:

CARTOONS

You see, back in my day we had cartoons. We had He-Man, we had G.I. Joe and we had Transformers. And yeah, we rocked their images on our shirts and jackets. We had book covers made by television networks promoting their cartoons; book covers with ThunderCats and the Ghostbusters. Then we got something so revolutionary, that 'til this day, it still is running strong — a smart alec, mischievous, underachiever by the name of Bart Simpson.

Everyone lost their minds.

So where are we at now? My son doesn't even watch Saturday morning cartoons. He gets Nickelodeon or Cartoon Network all day long with basically the same cartoon character type, just drawn a different way. Yeah, they tried to bring back some of the classics, and we try to sit them down and explain why the new G.I. Joe or ThunderCats cartoons are good.

Then they turn to us and say, "What's so special about that?"

MUSIC

Remember when we had good, innocent wholesome music? (Not really, people have been pushing the envelope for a long time.)

We grew up with Michael Jackson who gave us sparkling gloves and zippered leather jackets. Nothing really wrong with that. We had Pat Benatar with leggings and headbands. Again, nothing really wrong with that, and it promoted a workout.

Now? Lady Gaga walks around with a

meat dress. Katy

Perry gloats about the taste of cherry Chapstick and people begin to blush. And Rihanna? Rihanna dresses in a conspicuous manner that is only eclipsed by the lyrics in her songs.

So what does this have to deal with school? Well, for starters you have the fashion. These celebrity singers and rock stars set the standard. Kids want to wear what the "stars" are wearing. Walk into a kid's section and suddenly dressing my kid in a Pokémon t-shirt isn't as ridiculous as I thought it would be. Wearing hand-me-downs used to be a source of contention in a household. Now kids flock to thrift stores to wear clothes that other kids threw out. This mystifies me, but does not baffle me like one piece of clothing does. A piece of clothing that would warrant it's own rant and really fires some people up... skinny jeans.

Thanks Justin Bieber.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

When I was young we didn't have an iPad. We didn't have an iPhone. We had little calculators on our watches. That was high-tech. The first time I saw one of those watches I thought the kid must have gotten it from some scientist who worked on rockets. I mean, I was counting on my fingers back then (and still do now), and the kid in the desk next to me is counting on his wrist. High-tech Bill Gates type of

technology.

Now, kids have phones that do everything but drive them to school. They've got iPads that can carry more information than the five or six one-pound books we had. Which leads me to the next piece of gear that was essential.

The backpack. It's almost a non-issue now with the technology we have now. Why carry 10 pounds of paper when you can carry a one pound plastic computer? Sure not everyone has one, but not everyone had a computer 20 years ago either. It's a new age.

Gone are the Big Chief notebooks and the Trapper Keeper. The pencil boxes filled with colored pencils that you never used (except for the red or blue to grade papers. Interesting, they even had a two-sided pencil that had one end red and the other end blue. Revolutionary!) Where do we go from here? When will my son, having children of his own, get a school supply list and shake his head from side to side and say,

"Back in my day..."

Laid to rest

on Iwo Jima's shores

Photos by
Senior Chief Petty Officer Daniel Sanford



[Top, left] Chief Petty Officer Andrew Thomasson lays his grandfather, Chief Petty Officer Oscar Thomasson's ashes to rest Aug. 28 on Iwo Jima's Invasion Beach. Thomasson was with more than 60 chief petty officers and chief petty officer selectees taking part in a heritage trip that emphasized the historic significance for both U.S. and Japanese service members who fought in the Battle for Iwo Jima during World War II. Thomasson's grandfather's landing craft was destroyed while making its way to the island during the battle's initial assault. Thomasson ultimately survived the battle and went on to raise a family near Wichita, Kan. He passed away Dec. 22, 2006, at the age of 80.

[Top, right] Chief Petty Officer Andrew Thomasson displays the case that holds his grandfather's ashes Aug. 28. Thomasson soon boarded a plane departing Naval Air Facility Misawa and traveled to Iwo Jima, where he laid the ashes of his grandfather to rest on Iwo Jima's Invasion Beach.

[Middle, left] Petty Officer 1st Class Joshua Ward (left) salutes Chief Petty Officer Andrew Thomasson Aug. 28 before ceremoniously presenting him with his grandfather's ashes.

[Middle, right] Chief Petty Officer Andrew Thomasson perseveres through the powerful Iwo Jima tide so he can fulfill his promise to his family and lay his grandfather's ashes to rest on the shores.

[Left] Chief Petty Officer Andrew Thomasson (right) hugs Senior Chief Petty Officer Ken Ballard Aug. 28 after he laid his grandfather's ashes to rest at Iwo Jima's Invasion Beach.



WORKOUT MYTHS

By Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi

Are you doing more harm than good?

Physical fitness is a part of a Marine's everyday life, whether it's unit physical training or hitting the gym during some downtime.

Along the path to improving our physical abilities, we naturally come across rumors about what is and what is not good for us.

Many of these workout suggestions can actually be damaging our bodies and slow the progress in our training.

We hear these "myths" from friends, co-workers or even strangers at the gym. Just because they are running next to you on the treadmill or are a good friend doesn't make them a reliable source.

Most of us learn about stretching before every workout during elementary school gym. But there is more than one type of stretching, and each has a different purpose.

Static stretching, such as touching your toes or quad stretches, as a warm-up has not been proven to help prevent injuries during a workout.

"You want to do more dynamic warm-ups, starting with general mobility," said John Hollis, recreational specialist, West Gym, who also holds a Masters degree in physical fitness.

To warm up muscles, exercises such as jumping jacks or stationary squats are recommended. Move on to lunges and "Frankenstein" walks for an added boost.

Although static stretching doesn't do much as a warm-up, it has its place at the end of a workout, helping start the recovery process of the muscles.

Cardio exercises are an important part of raising and maintaining stamina and endurance. But which is better for the body: running on a treadmill or outside?

There is a give and take when deciding between the two.

Treadmills provide better cushion for the joints compared to running on asphalt, and it helps keep a steady pace during a run. Adjusting the incline setting to one percent furthers a closer simulation to outdoor running. However, it is still not the same.

"You're not propelling yourself forward," Hollis said. "You're keeping up with the tread."

Although treadmills save some wear-and-tear on the joints, a part of the physical gain of running outdoors is taken away. Purchasing the right kind of running shoes can help alleviate the stress outdoor running puts on your joints. Talk with a footwear expert at any athletic store to find out what style and type suits your body and exercise lifestyle.

Protein is a key building block of muscle growth. This widely known fact sends many to the local nutrition stores buying large amounts of protein shake products. While it doesn't do much harm getting in the extra protein, it's not as good as what you might get from chicken breast or fish.

"I think the main benefit of protein shakes right after you're working out is the convenience," Hollis said. "It starts the recovery process and you want some protein and carbohydrates within 30 minutes of your workout."

Drink protein shakes as needed, but be sure it's not the body's only means of protein.

Many people's main goal in exercise is weight loss. Some may spend much of their time in saunas or steam rooms trying to sweat the weight off. This not only doesn't work, it can be harmful.

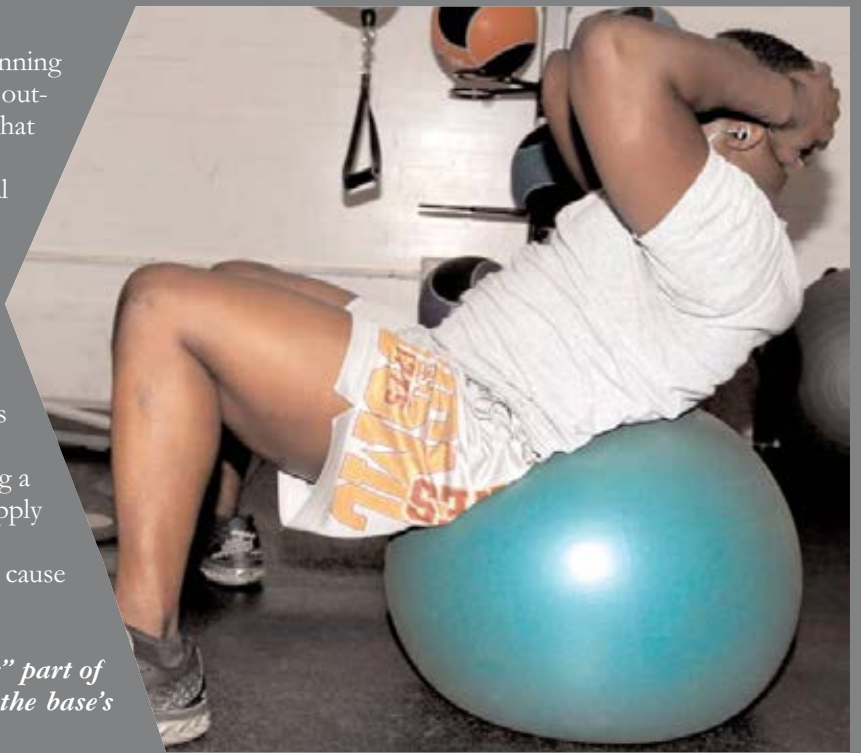
Initially, there is some weight loss. You sweat so profusely, the body loses a lot of water causing a drop in weight. However, all this weight is gained back once the body replenishes its water supply throughout the day.

Not only does it not work toward weight loss, but staying in these rooms for too long can cause people to pass out or give them heart problems.

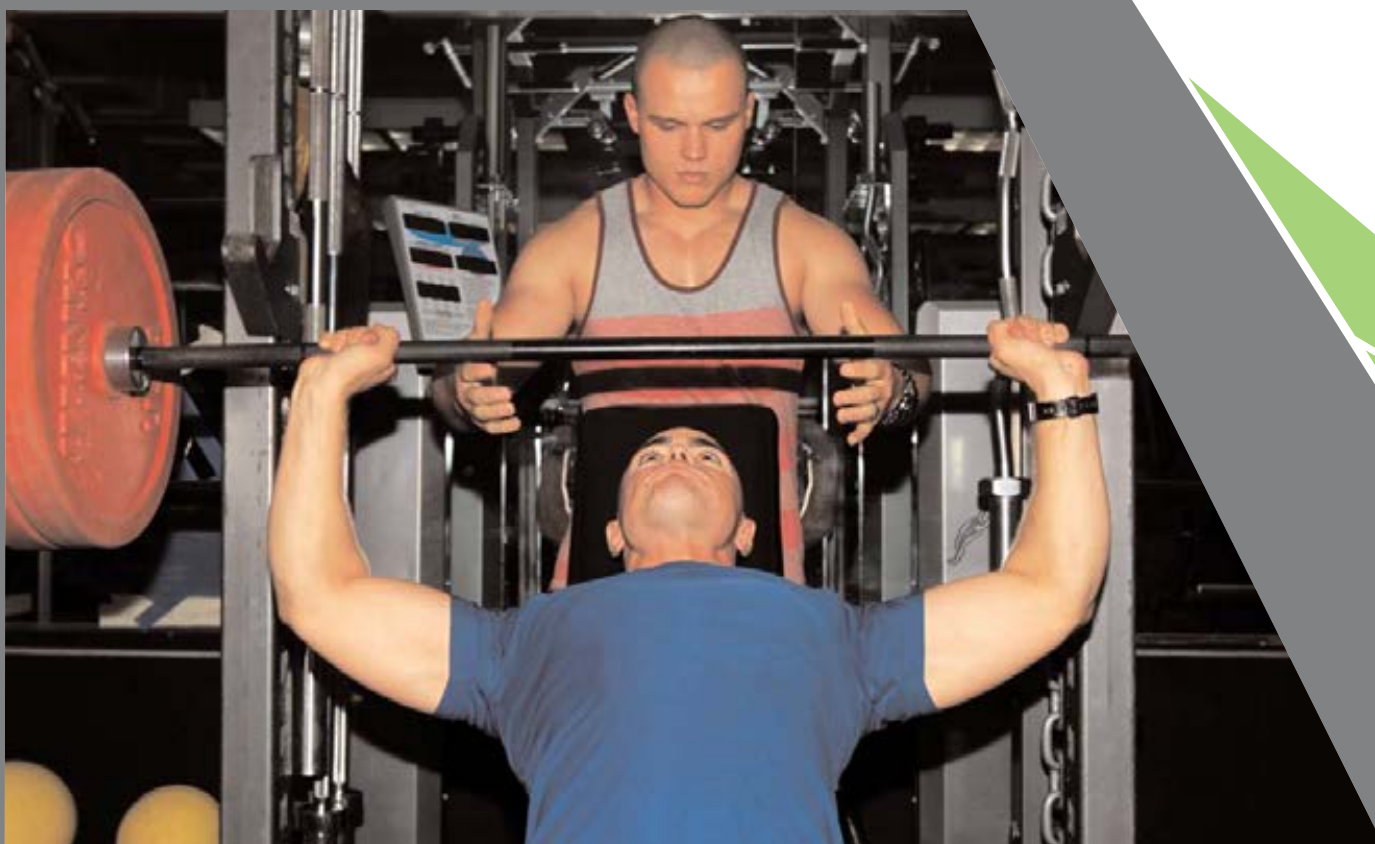
These are just some of the myths floating around. Before making any "friendly suggestions" part of your regular routine, make sure to check the facts with a knowledgeable source. Trainers at the base's gym are on staff to help.



LANCE CPL. MATTHEW Z. ALLEN



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

[Above] Cpl. Connor O'Brien, tow gunner, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, bench presses at the Combat Center's West Gym and Fitness Center Aug. 29.

[Top, right] Sgt. Theodore Robinson, administrative specialist, Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, performs crunches on a stability ball at the Combat Center's West Gym and Fitness Center Aug. 29



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

Monday: Margarita Mondays
Thursday: Thirsty Thursday, 7 - 10 p.m.
Friday: Karaoke Night 6 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Steak night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch
Monday: All-hands steak night, 4:30 - 8 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

Anne of Green Gables

When: Aug. 24 - Sept. 22
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For tickets and information call 316-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Zapf Dingbats

Musical melting-pot sensation performs
When: 8 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 7
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

Kung Fu String Girls

Group combines martial arts and string instruments in performance
When: 6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 6
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

B.B. King

King of Blues performs
When: 8:00 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 8
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Joe Walsh

Former Eagles guitarist performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday Sept. 29
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Ian Anderson

Professional flutist plays
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Oct. 19
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>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, August 31

6 p.m. - Madea's Witness Protection, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, 3D, Rated R
Midnight - Magic Mike, Rated R

Saturday, September 1

10:30 a.m. - **Free Matinee** Kung Fu Panda 2, Rated PG
12:30 p.m. - People Like Us, Rated PG-13
3 p.m. - The Amazing Spider Man 3D, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - The Amazing Spider Man, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Seeking a Friend for the End of the World, Rated R
Midnight - Magic Mike, Rated R

Sunday, September 2

12:30 p.m. - Ice Age Continental Drift, Rated PG
3 p.m. - Ice Age Continental Drift, 3D Rated PG
6 p.m. - The Amazing Spider Man, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Batman: Dark Knight Rises, Rated PG-13

Monday, September 3

2 p.m. - Ice Age Continental Drift, Rated PG
6 p.m. - Madea's Witness Protection, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Batman: Dark Knight Rises, Rated PG-13

Tuesday, September 4

7 p.m. - Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, Rated R

Wednesday, September 5

5:30 p.m. - People Like Us, Rated PG-13
8:30 p.m. - The Amazing Spider Man, Rated PG-13

Thursday, September 6

5:30 p.m. - Magic Mike, Rated R
8:30 p.m. - Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, Rated R

Profanely funny election-season parody has unifying power



COURTESY PHOTO

Will Ferrell plays Cam Braden, the vain, dim-bulb incumbent running on a ticket of "strong hair" and a buzzword-loaded platform of "America, Jesus and freedom." Zach Galifianakis is his unlikely challenger, Marty Huggins, the town's soft-spoken, gnome-like tourism director put up to the job by a couple of local billionaire brothers with a shady business agenda.

NEIL POND

"The Campaign"

Starring Will Ferrell & Zach Galifianakis
Directed by Jay Roach
Rated R, 85 min.

Politics sure can be polarizing, but laughter has the power to bring people together.

At least that's what this spoofy election-season satire is counting on, asking voters — and viewers — of all stripes to set aside their divisive differences and join in the unifying fun of watching two doofuses slug it out in a comically contentious race to represent their North Carolina hometown in Washington.

Will Ferrell plays Cam Braden, the vain, dim-bulb incumbent running on a ticket of "strong hair" and a buzzword-loaded platform of "America, Jesus and freedom."

Zach Galifianakis is his

unlikely challenger, Marty Huggins, the town's soft-spoken, gnome-like tourism director put up to the job by a couple of local billionaire brothers (Dan Aykroyd and John Lithgow) with a shady business agenda.

With both candidates determined to do whatever it takes to win, it doesn't take long before the politics get down and dirty — and profanely funny. There's a leaked sex tape... "trash-talking" debates... TV ads that sink to desperately hilarious lows... a baby-kissing photop that takes a right-hook turn for the worse... and an assortment of other downward-spiraling slimeball silliness as the weeks tick off to election day.

Although the campaign antics are outrageous and outlandish, they're grounded in the base realities of modern-day politics, a bloody mash-up in which almost any chink in a candidate's armor can become a gaping, game-changing wound. A scene toward the end of the movie,

when Cam and Marty compare old scars from childhood, is — like everything else — played for laughs; Marty's scars are, well... more extensive than you'd expect. But the implication is clear: This game can maim.

"The Campaign" isn't trying to score points as social commentary; it just wants to take potty-mouth potshots at a process that's become an easy target to lampoon, and issues that that become grist from almost every real-life political grind, including "family values," religion, terrorism and jobs. As the steel-edged campaign consultant hired to transform Marty into a cutthroat competitor, Dylan McDermott is an over-the-top parody of the process that can turn an otherwise ordinary life inside-out in run for almost any elected office.

There's more than a trace in Ferrell's character of his extensive "Saturday Night Live" skit experience playing George "Dubya" Bush, but the movie itself is clearly

non-partisan and doesn't paint either candidate identifiably red or blue.

There are, however, recognizable incidents from modern-day headlines worked into the script with a wink-wink, nudge-nudge — a "hunting accident" a la Dick Cheney, an uncooperative doorknob (a Bush press conference gaffe that went viral in 2006), and the references to Cam's "strong hair" that recall the media reports of one-time presidential candidate John Edwards' \$500 super-coifs.

With a John Belushi-like ability to crawl inside a role and disappear, Galifianakis makes Marty the movie's most interesting character. But Ferrell certainly gets his share of the laughs, usually making it look so easy, often deadpanning and rarely having to overact.

Together, they're a comedy dream ticket. I'd like to see these two very funny guys team up again. In this heated election season, they definitely get my vote.

Back to School Bash

Combat Center prepares for new school year with information fair

Photos by Sgt. Heather Golden



For educational tips and information, contact the school liason at 760-830-1574



[Top] Amber Bilderain, L.I.N.K.S, talks with young attendees of the Back To School Bash about her organization Aug. 24. The event was a chance for families to mingle and to learn about the many community and military organizations they can take advantage of during their children's upcoming school year.

[Left] A family receives a raffle ticket at the Back To School Bash Aug. 24. The raffle was funded through the Exceptional Family Member Program, and prizes included gift cards to the Marine Corps Exchange on base.

[Right, bottom] Madison Blair, age 5, concentrates on making a clothes pin doll Aug. 24 at the Girl Scouts' booth at the Back To School Bash. The Girl Scouts were just one of dozens of organizations present at the Bash educating families on what programs they offer for children during the upcoming school year.