



OBSERVATION POST

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1st Tank Battalion awards Marines

[Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
Combat Correspondent]

Marines with 1st Tank Battalion received medals in recognition of their actions while deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Tuesday at the battalion's compound.

The Marines who received the awards were from Company D, 1st Tanks. The company returned to the Combat Center in late July, marking the end of a seven-month combat deployment.

"I'm extremely proud of (the Marines)," said Capt. Chris Ashinhurst, company commander, Co. D, 1st Tanks. "They never backed down and accom-



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Cpl. Phillip V. Lim, tank crewman, Company D, is awarded a Purple Heart during a ceremony at 1st Tank Battalion's compound Sept. 3.

plished the mission."

The awards included three Purple Hearts, a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal and a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. They were presented by Maj. Andrew Dirkes, executive officer, 1st Tanks.

"We don't look to put ourselves in harm's way, but our mission takes us there," said Sgt. Maj. Brian Priester, sergeant major, 1st Tanks. "Some of these Marines suffered wounds but they continued on and performed as expected."

Staff Sgt. Kyle D. Shackelford, Cpl. Philip V. Lim and Lance Cpl. Eric A. Targon were awarded Purple Hearts.

A Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal was awarded to Staff Sgt. Jamie L. Held for his

See **AWARD** page A5

Oasis

A hidden desert

Local nature preserve hosts unique environment



For more photos of the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, taken by Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimilis, see A8

'CUTTING EDGE' PREPARES TO DEPLOY

[Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
Combat Correspondent]

Marines and sailors with the advanced party of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, staged their gear while family and loved ones took in every minute they had left with their service

member before the buses departed during the early morning Thursday at the softball field.

The unit, consisting of approximately 100 Marines and sailors, deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and will be replacing 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, who will be returning to the Combat Center.

"Our primary mission is to help increase the Afghan National Security Forces' capacity," said Lt. Col. Daniel Wittnam, battalion commander, 3/7. "We will be working with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police to create stability within the region."

Wittnam addressed the unit and gave his support to the families and loved ones who are staying back and supporting from home.

"We've been very busy over the last six



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Cpl. Francisco Demara, maintenance management chief, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, hugs his mother, Cecilia, moments before deploying with the ADVON party Sept. 4.

months, training very hard," Wittnam said. "But our families are resilient, and I think they are ready for this deployment because we have done everything that we can to help prepare

See **CUTTING EDGE** page A5

Combat Marksmanship Coach Course begins at the Combat Center

[Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya
Combat Correspondent]

Students at the Combat Marksmanship Coach Course began their training at the Combat Center rifle range Wednesday. The Marines are training with the Marksmanship Training Unit to become marksmanship coaches.

"For the next three weeks, these Marines have to eat, sleep and

See **CMC** page A5

New education facility opens

[Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
Combat Correspondent]

The Combat Center celebrated the official opening of a new home for education and higher learning with the cutting of a ribbon during a grand opening ceremony for the Lifelong Learning Education Center, at building 1530, Thursday.

Plans to event the three-story building were first brought to life by Congressman Jerry Lewis when he toured the base in 2008. Since then, the five-year project became dedicated to giving Combat Center students and staff top-of-the-line equipment and a great learning environment.

See **CENTER** page A5



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Col. James Hanlon, assistant chief of staff, MCCS; Col. George Aucoin, chief of staff, MCAGCC; Jeff Fourier, branch head, Lifelong Learning Education Center; Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Commanding General, MCAGCC; Glenn Grubbs, architect, Public Works; and Richard New, project manager, MCCS, cut the ribbon of the Lifelong Learning Education Center during a grand opening ceremony at building 1530 Thursday.

3/7 ADVON departs for Afghanistan

[Cpl. D.J. Wu
Combat Correspondent]

Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, completed their iteration of the Integrated Training Exercise here two weeks ago. They've been deemed ready by the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group to deploy to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, but they still have a few steps to take before they are fully good to go.

"I think our ITX went pretty well and we're one step closer to being deployed," said Staff Sgt. Sourinha Phakousonh, platoon sergeant, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "They're well trained and they've been training for the past six, seven months and we're still hitting them hard."

"In the end, (logistics) turns out to be the most important step," said Sgt. Zachariah Korte, squad leader, Co. I, 3/7. "Behind all the training and all the work we do, if we don't have (logistics) all taken care of, then it's pretty much all for nothing, because you just spend all your time trying to fix all these problems you created for yourself. It's a pretty huge step in the deployment process."

There is a lot to get done before a unit is officially ready to deploy. There are small things like making sure their paperwork is in order, and the completion of medical and dental checkups. It is also the time when

See **ADVON** page A5

COMBAT CENTER SHOOTERS **FACE OFF**

The Combat Center is scheduled to host several shooting competitions open to Marines and sailors.

Who: Service members and DoD employees
What: Intramurals (Rifle and Pistol Competition)
When: Sept. 16 - Oct. 4
Where: MCAGCC Marksmanship Training Unit
Why: Enhance combat-marksmanship proficiency aboard the base.

In order to enhance combat-marksmanship proficiency aboard the base, the Combat Center is scheduled to host the Intramurals (Rifle and Pistol Competition) from Sept. 16 to Oct. 4 at the Combat Center's Marksmanship Training Unit. All Marines and sailors will have the opportunity to receive a Combat Marksmanship Course certification and annual rifle and pistol qualification for FY14.

Who: Anyone with base access
What: High Desert Shooting Club NRA High- Power and Long-Range Regional Match
When: Nov. 13 - 17
Where: MCAGCC Rifle Range 1
Why: Inspire interest and desire for self improvement in marksmanship.

In an effort to stimulate interest and desire for self improvement in marksmanship, the Combat Center will be hosting the High Desert Shooting Club, National Rifle Association High-Power and Long-Range Regional Match at the Marksmanship Training Unit. The goal is to enhance the proficiency of Marines in the use of small arms by refining precision marksmanship skills through advanced marksmanship training and competition.

For more information, please contact the Marksmanship Training Unit at 830-6700.

Marine Corps *Trivia*

Name that battalion

- 1 Formed on New Year's Day 1941 in San Diego as a 75mm howitzer battalion.
- 2 Deployed to the Pacific Theatre during World War II in July 1942, equipped with 75mm pack howitzers.
- 3 Served 34 months in the Pacific, providing artillery support for five of the six Marine divisions that served in WWII, ultimately firing more than 56,000 rounds against the Japanese.
- 4 Fired the first field-artillery round in a U.S. offensive in WWII.
- 5 Provided field-artillery support for a landing attack for the first time in Marine Corps history.
- 6 Participated in six combat landings — Tulagi, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Guam, Saipan and Iwo Jima.
- 7 Was the only artillery unit to fight on both Guam and Saipan.
- 8 Earned six battle stars, three Presidential Unit Citations and two Naval Citations.

Find the answer in the Sept. 13 issue of The Observation Post.

ATTENTION MARINES FROM LOUISIANA AND MISSISSIPPI:

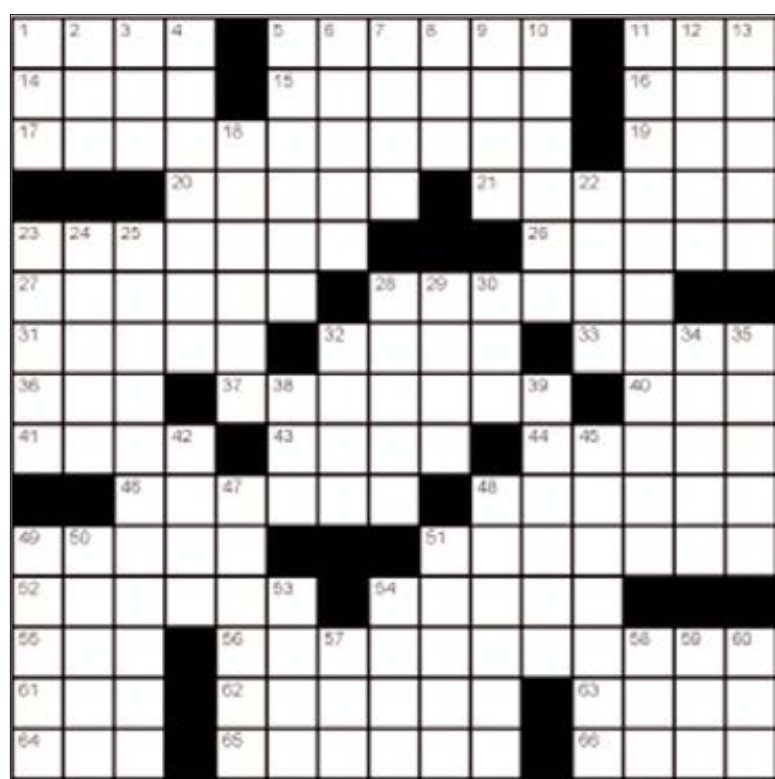
Recruiting Station Baton Rouge is requesting Marines to participate in Recruiter Assistance at the following Recruiting Substations:

Alexandria, La: (318) 443-0408	Hammond, La: (985) 345-7227	Lafayette, La: (337) 233-1454	Shreveport, La: (318) 688-5893
Baton Rouge, La: (225) 927-2842	Hattiesburg, Miss: (601) 261-3488	Lake Charles, La: (337) 433-9534	-----
Gulfport, Miss: (228) 896-1195	Jackson, Miss: (601) 353-2031	New Orleans, La: (504) 466-1984	For more information call: (225) 928-0348

 Visit the official MCAGCC facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter	 The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO	 The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter
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FORE FOR FOUR

- ACROSS**
1. They're often covered with baby food
 5. "The Human Comedy" author
 11. Sporty British car, for short
 14. Lazing about
 15. "My Favorite Year" star Peter
 16. Cousin of org, com, and net
 17. "Rebel Without a Cause" actress
 19. Fish eggs
 20. Eliot's "___ Marner"
 21. Detroit baseball team
 23. Magazine founder Gloria
 26. John, Jane, etc.
 27. Route to the roof
 28. In need of calories
 31. Sigourney Weaver flick
 32. Not too shabby
 33. Latvia's capital
 36. Get benched
 37. Tulsa residents, e.g.
 40. Sought office
 41. Sarcastic laugh
 43. Mr. Flintstone
 44. Rainbow or lake, e.g.
 46. Made shine
 48. Medal metal
 49. Underworld figure
 51. Doesn't just brush
 52. What some graduate with
- DOWN**
1. Recycling container
 2. Ore. neighbor
 3. Diner order
 4. Coast
 5. Big water heater
 6. 2010 action movie, with "The"
 7. Meteorologist's predictions
 8. Lion's home, maybe
 9. Bunches
 10. Giving up
 11. Best Actor of 1990
 12. Love to pieces
 13. Shot in the dark
 18. Content of some closets
 22. Teri of "Young Frankenstein"
 23. Cut drastically, as prices
 24. Shire of "The Godfather" movies



25. Archie's mate
28. Gave an edge to
29. "Previously owned," in ad-speak
30. Neither here ___ there
32. Achy
34. Bandage material
35. Primes the pot
38. Not working
39. Pungent
42. Wheels
45. Speake's platform
47. Prepare a disk for data
48. Turns the music way up
49. Step
50. Unfortunate fellow
51. ___ and blood (kin)
53. Spot
54. "ER" command
57. D.C. figure
58. Before
59. This may be inflated
60. Improved partner

SUDOKU 3012D

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	6			8				5
	8							3
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2				4				9
3			6		8			4



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Palm Springs:
 - Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.
 - Whispering Palms Apts., 449 E. Arenas Road
 - NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive

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

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Norris

Anchorage, Alaska Combat Videographer, 24

PAVALA



> **To me, the Marine Corps** is a smaller representation of the world. If you just look at it, it's just normal, everyday kids, trained to be Marines.

> **It's hard to compare (Alaska).** I think Hawaii would understand, because in Alaska, yes it's part of the United States, but we've always felt like we're a part of the "Lower 48." We always say "Lower 48" because we include Hawaii in our plight. I'm sure Hawaii feels the same way we do.

> **Anchorage, it's the biggest city** (in Alaska.) I think it's up to 300,000 people now. I was there my whole life.

> **I remember laughing when California** had a snow storm and they're like "put on your jackets. It's going to be 60 degrees." And we're up there in single digits like, "Can we have 60-degree weather right now."

> **Now, 60 degrees is chilly to me.** It's tough when I go back. I went back about 2 years ago. My mom opened the door for maybe a split-second and a cold breeze came through. It felt like Death's hand just came and grabbed me. I felt this chilling embrace. I crunched up and yelled at my mom to close the door. It was only a split-second, but I thought I had died.

> **Before joining the Marine Corps,** I was born and raised there. What's funny is, when I would go to warm up my car, I would just go outside in shorts and a t-shirt. I would run outside barefoot in the snow and ice to warm up my car. I'd be shivering, but I could take it.

> **Well, thanks to Sarah Palin,** everyone thinks we talk in a Canadian accent, but we really don't ... at all. I actually looked it up. Somebody asked what kind of accents we speak in Alaska. Some person said, "Well, my son came back from Alaska with his wife and they speak Canadian so they must all speak Canadian." No.

> **A lot of people will ask me** if there are a lot of Eskimos up there. The first thing I say is, "Alaskan Natives." And "Yes, but there are a lot of Caucasians as well."

> **During the snowy seasons,** you can make up driving lanes on the roads. A four-lane road will turn into a three-lane road. My friends and I would be so excited for fresh snow and we'd be the first ones driving into it. We were like, "Yes, we make up the roads." That's also how we'd know

if someone is new, because they'd start driving on the sidewalk.

> **Of course I miss** my family but that's a given. I miss when the snow is setting in and it's falling down. Everything is all white but you can still see the mountains and it's dead silent. I miss how you can smell the air and everything around you.

> **I took a personality test for jobs,** and my scores were hilarious. I answered all these questions and my scores were realism, 40. Cool, ok. Investigative, 42. Ok, that sounds like me. Then social, 2, and I was like, "What?"

> **No middle name.** It's not boring, it's awesome. It's N.P., no problem.

> **I'm looking forward** to being older than 25. You start meeting people that are been-there, done-that, kind of people.

> **For me, I kind of realized** that video isn't something that I could get into as much as I thought, but more as a hobby and doing things on my own. Working for somebody else, and creating what somebody else wants, I don't know about that. Creativity is all in the eye of the beholder. So, for a job I'm probably going for something more realistic.

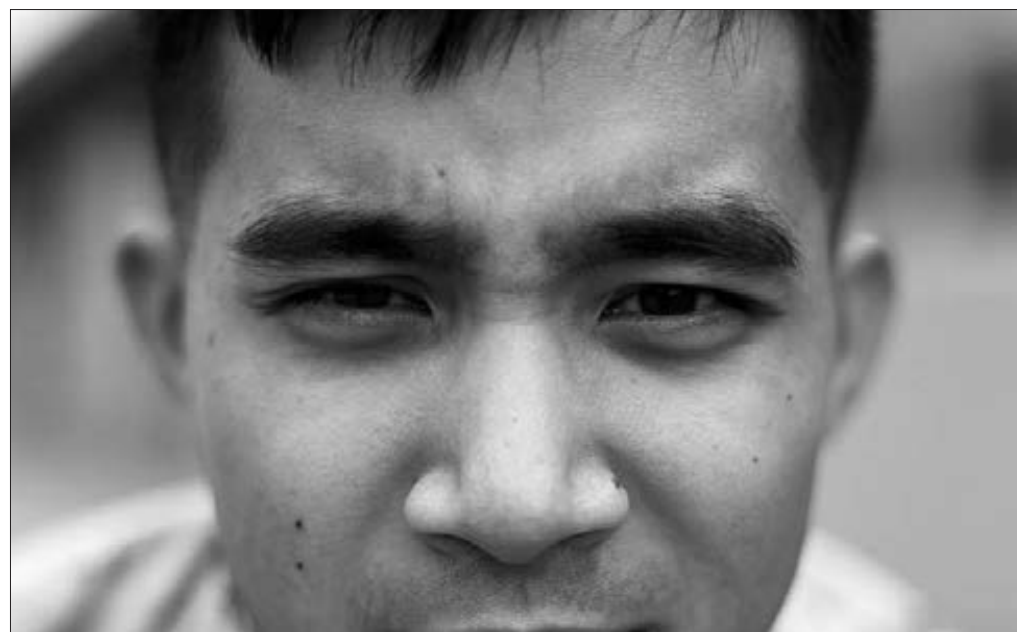
> **It's been a hell of a ride,** but I'm glad I did it.

> **This is how** I think of it when I get out. I want to start seeing the sights and traveling more. I've been wanting to go to New Zealand for 2 years. I wanted to do a solo hike there. If not there, somewhere.

> **I went to New York City** once and I went to that park in the middle. I saw that they can pretend to be in the woods and then you look to the right and there's a building.

> **I don't really place** myself in these names, these brackets, these labels. I just live.

Interviewed by Cpl. D.J. Wu
Sept 3, 2013



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Fair Winds & Following Seas

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. Scott Reel



Former Combat Center Sgt. Maj. retires after 32 years of service

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Sgt. Maj. Harrison L. Tanksley, recent sergeant major of I Marine Expeditionary Force Forward, retired after 32 years of service during a ceremony aboard MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Aug. 29.

During the ceremony, Tanksley received a Bronze Star for superior professionalism and inspiring leadership during his recent one-year deployment to Afghanistan.

Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Commanding General of the Combat Center, explained Tanksley's impact on many Marines.

"He's taught us. He's coached us. He's mentored us. We've learned from him, and we're here today to thank him, which I think makes it a very special day," Berger said.

Berger read a letter from Maj. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus, former commanding general of I MEF (Fwd), who couldn't be present at the ceremony.

"I often reflect back on our time as battle buddies in Afghanistan. I will never be able to express my gratitude for all you did to promote the spirit of teamwork, to keep me focused on the important things, to be the advocate for our

Marines and coalition partners, and to keep the chief of staff in line. You made a difference. And you left a legacy of professionalism that will live on in our hearts and in our actions as we try to be like "Tank," Gurganus wrote.

After reading the letter and providing an extensive list of specifics regarding Tanksley's impact over his career, he gave the podium over to the Marine being honored.

"I didn't get here by myself," Tanksley said. "I had a lot of help along the way, some senior to me, some junior to me. It's a bittersweet day for me, but I am truly blessed to have had the honor and privilege to serve our Corps, our nation and our individual Marines."

Tanksley individually thanked almost every person in the crowd with some tribute to how they helped him obtain his current success. After thanking his family, children and loving wife; Tanksley finished his speech in a signature manner.

"In closing, thanks to each one of you for sharing this moment with my family and I. It means a lot to us, and we hope you enjoy the rest of the day like we will. God bless our country, our Corps and Semper Fidelis," Tanksley said.

Sgt. Maj. Harrison L. Tanksley, recent sergeant major of I Marine Expeditionary Force Forward, received a Bronze Star at his retirement ceremony aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Aug. 29. Tanksley was honored for superior professionalism and inspiring leadership during his recent one-year deployment to Afghanistan.

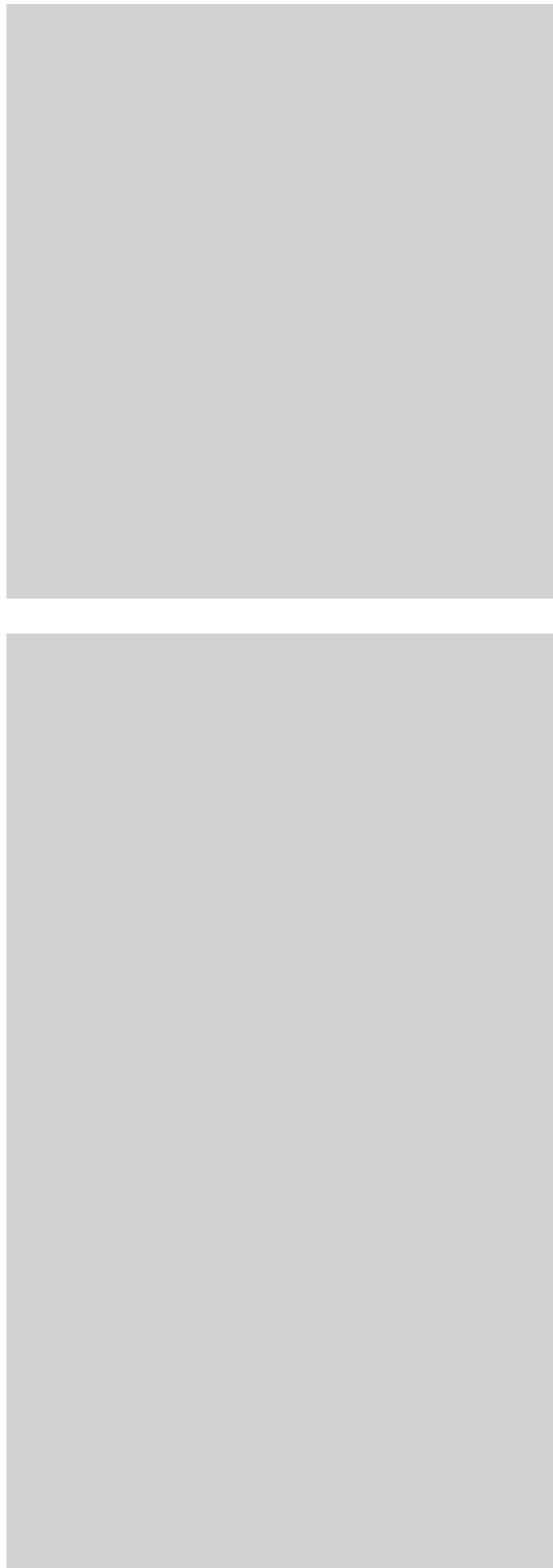
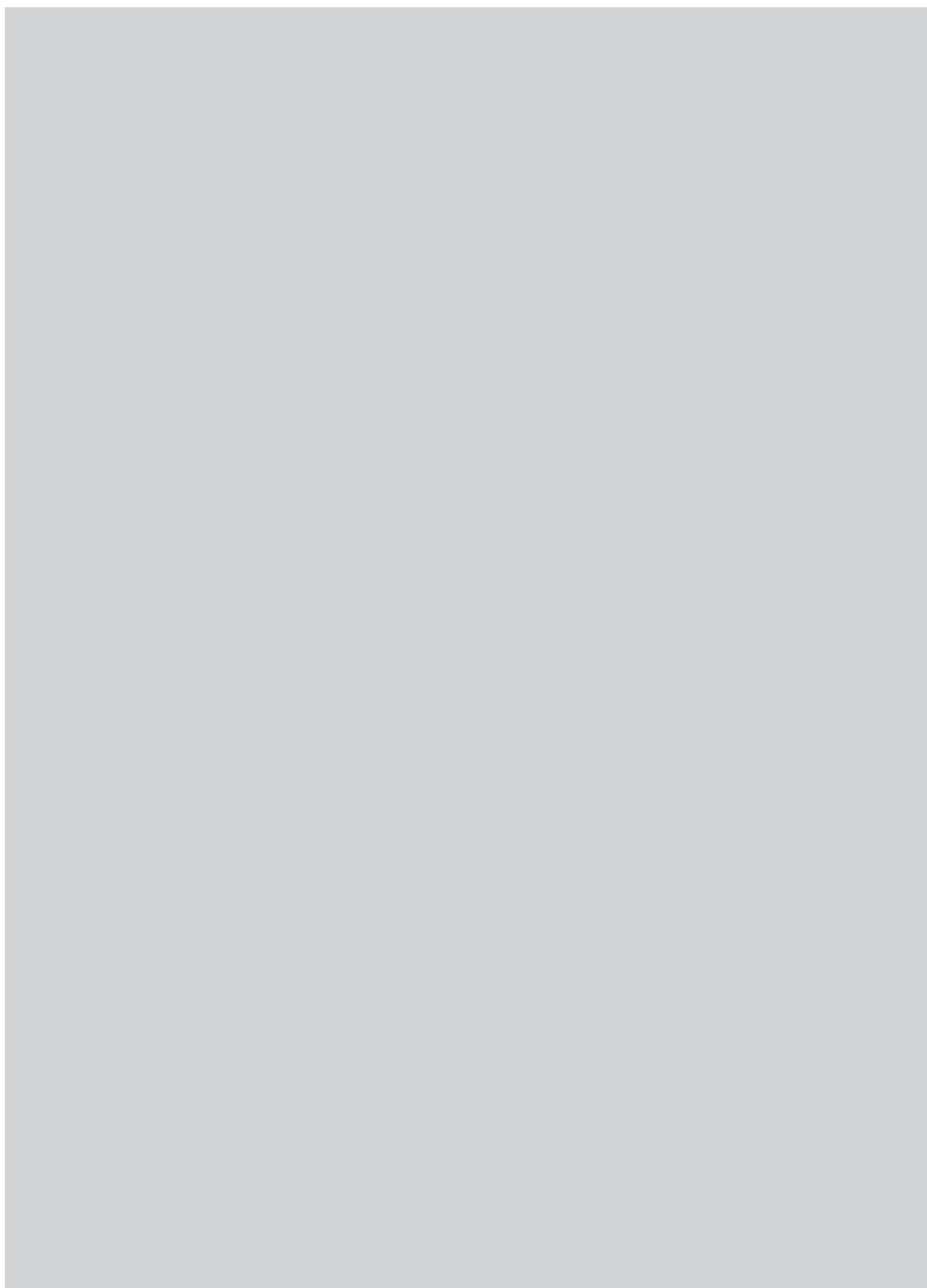


"We've learned from him, and we're here today to thank him, which I think makes it a very special day this morning."
— Maj. Gen. David H. Berger

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See page B2 for Sunset Cinema movie schedule



AWARD, from A1

efforts engaging enemy fighters during a recovery mission.

A Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal was awarded to Cpl. Adam Nichols for continuing his push against enemy fighters during the recovery mission.

All Marines awarded medals were recognized because of their efforts during Operation Dynamic Partner.

According to Ashinhurst, the Marines were part of a M 88 recovery-vehicle crew during Operation Dynamic Partner and were recovering disabled vehicles when they came under extremely intense fire. The Marines engaged and destroyed the

enemy fighters while continuing their recovery. With the exception of one vehicle, all gear was recovered and no Marines were lost.

"It shows that under fire, these Marines are capable of calling on their training and leading and protecting each other," Priester said.

"These Marines made a difference," said Dirkes. "They earned these awards and recognitions. I am honored to serve with them."

Their commitment to the mission instills pride in 1st Tank Battalion.

"They worked hard and fought hard," Ashinhurst said. "I'm extremely proud of all of them."

CMC, from A1

breathe marksmanship," said Cpl. Troy Fix, chief instructor, marksmanship training unit. "After they graduate, it is going to be their job to go back to their units and train those Marines on how to be better marksman."

To earn a seat in the course, Marines must complete a student screening checklist and must have scored at least a marksman score on their most recent rifle range qualification.

In order to graduate the course, Marines must score a sharpshooter score or higher with the rifle, at least a marksman with the pistol, pass two of the three written examinations and they cannot miss more than two days of training.

Those who graduate from the course receive

an additional Military Occupational Specialty as a combat marksmanship coach. The coaches train students in the basic knowledge and fundamentals of proper marksmanship coaching and instruction. The students also face written examinations, practical application exercises, physical and live-fire training with both a rifle and pistol.

"This course isn't for competition shooting," said Cpl. Erik Witt, instructor, MTU. "Everything they do here relates back to combat. They must be able to perform in combat situations and be able to teach other Marines what they are learning during this course."

Once Marines have completed the coach's course, there is a follow-on course they can participate in. The second course will certify the Marines as combat marksmanship trainers.

CUTTING EDGE, from A1

them both mentally and emotionally."

With the buses ready to go, the unit loaded their gear to begin their journey to Afghanistan. The last moments the Marines and sailors had with their families were solemn.

"The first few weeks are tough and it doesn't get much easier," said Carlye Bibb, wife of Cpl. Bradley Bibb, field radio operator, 3/7. "I try to stay focused and understand that they are over there for a reason."

"I have very mixed emotions," said Cecilia Demara, mother of Cpl. Francisco Demara, maintenance management chief, 3/7. "It's a wonderful feeling to know what he's accomplished, but at the same time it's hard seeing him go away."

For the Bibb and Demara families, this will be the second time they face

the hardship of having a loved one deploy. They hope that the support given to them by the family readiness program and methods of communication will help get them through the eight-month deployment.

The Marines and sailors are slated to return in April of next year.

"I can't imagine a unit that's done more training than we have these past few months," Wittnam said. "All of it has been progressive in nature. It's all necessary for the fight ahead."



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Cpl. Bradley Bibb, field radio operator, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, spends time with his wife, Carlye, and son, Taytum, 2, before departing the Combat Center for deployment Thursday.

ADVON, from A1

Marines and sailors will check their gear for mission readiness. But more importantly, this is the time when service members will make sure their family members are ready for them to deploy.

"We've got a lot of checklists we're going through right now," Phakousonh said. "It's all to get the families and Marines ready for the deployment."

One thing missed in this stage can cause larger problems further down the road. A missed form here or a piece of gear unaccounted for can lead to trouble once deployed. It's important for the whole chain of command to know the status of their Marines.

"We have to make sure that everyone is 100 percent on everything," said Sgt. Zachary Harbing, squad leader, Co. I, 3/7, "(If we don't),

it will take away from our time in country and combat power, because it pulls Marines back to take care of that stuff while we're there. It's much harder to do it there because, we're half a world away."

The Marines of the "Cutting Edge" are doing everything they need to in making sure that this deployment to Afghanistan runs smoothly. They will finish all their paper work, triple-check all their gear and kiss their loved ones goodbye as they depart in the coming weeks.

CENTER, from A1

"We're excited to be here," said Erin Keeran, education and career specialist, Lifelong Learning Education Center. "This is a nice facility with a lot to offer."

The facility will house classes from National University, Copper Mountain College, and DeVry University. The 13 classrooms within the center are equipped with smart boards, loud-speaker systems, desks with electrical plug-in capabilities and space for up to 24 students.

"All classrooms are outfitted with state-of-the-art technology, such as Wi-Fi, and smart boards that can be used for presentations and to enhance the learning process," Keeran said. "It's a pleasant place to be."

The center will also host weekly Transition Readiness Seminar workshops dedicated to educating service members on benefits, education and employment opportunities and advice for writing a resume.

"It's a phenomenal program geared to help a sailor or Marine transition back into the civilian community with a high level of preparation," said Jeff Fourier, branch head, Lifelong Learning Education Center.

The Military Academic Skills Program is a four-week mathematics and remedial English skills program taught by Copper Mountain College professors.

"(MASP) is a great opportunity to re-learn something that will help (service members) improve in both their professional work and their personal lives as they pursue that next step of higher education," Fourier said.

The new education center brings the Combat Center a centralized location for the educational needs of its patrons. The building is a home for the growing community and a focal point for the base.

"These educational opportunities are endless," Fourier said. "It all starts here."

For more information on the types of schooling the Lifelong Learning Education Center offers, go to www.mcs29palms.com/pages/mfamservices/education.html.

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Story by: Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER OPENS NEW COMMISSARY

All hands aboard the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif., now have access to an on-base commissary and Marine-Mart, the first of its kind at MCMWTC.



NANCY O'NEILL

The 12,166-square-foot commissary has a stock assortment of more than 4,500 items and provides fresh produce, fresh meats, frozen foods and grocery sections for the 3,000 active-duty military personnel, retirees and family members aboard MCMWTC.

“Col. Norm Cooling, former commanding officer of MCMWTC, was an active proponent of this facility,” said Wendy Matuszak, store director. “During his tenure, he did everything he could to ensure that the Marines stationed at this very unique and remote base had a commissary.”

The 3,600-square-foot Marine-Mart, which is included in the facility, shelves other household items such as health and beauty aids, personal items, electronics, gifts and souvenirs.

In addition, patrons may request fresh fruit and vegetable trays and any grocery or meat item not regularly stocked in the Bridgeport Commissary but available at the Fallon Commissary in Naval Air Station Fallon, Nev., by special order. Most orders will be filled within 48 hours.

“The long anticipated new commissary offers

the installation well-known products at reasonable prices,” said Sgt. Maj. James C. Kirkland, MCMWTC sergeant major. “It’s selection, quantity and quality are comparable to those at grocery stores and Wal-Mart approximately 30 minutes from our housing and 60 minutes from the training

center.”

on their grocery bill by shopping at the commissary, and even more on items along the perimeter of the store,” Matuszak said.

The commissary is located in the Lincoln Military Housing Area, Coleville, Calif., 25 miles north of the training center and about a 30 minute drive up state highway 395. The Lincoln Housing Area serves as the only on-base military family housing area for MCMWTC.

“Location will always remain the key factor that is most appealing to MCMWTC,” Kirkland said. “Having the commissary within a walking distance for families during the harsh winter months makes a huge impact on both safety and family welfare.”

According to Matuszak, those aboard MCMWTC will find familiar faces with local members of the community that have been hired as friendly, courteous employees dedicated to meeting the needs of Bridgeport.

“I love it when I get to spend time at Bridgeport,” Matuszak said. “There is a feeling of community there; it’s the commissary where everybody knows your name, and that’s a good thing.”

“Having the commissary within walking distance for families during the harsh winter months makes a huge impact on both safety and family welfare.”

– Sgt. Maj. James C. Kirkland

Operated by the Defense Commissary Agency, commissaries sell products at average savings of more than 30 percent compared to commercial prices.

“A military family can save 30 percent or more



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FEED the Dawgs

by Cpl. D.J. Wu

DAWG PROJECT HONORS K9 HANDLERS

The military working-dog community is tight-knit and connected. Military working dogs first entered the service in March of 1942 to serve in the Army's K9 Corps. Today, dogs are still playing an active role in identifying explosives and taking down enemy combatants. The Dawg Project, a group started by a Vietnam-era veteran dog handler, travels the country reaching out to those who work with dogs in the military.

The Dawg Project made the trip to the Combat Center for its 5th Annual Feed the Dawgs event, where the organizers cooked up steaks, remembered the fallen and talked about the working-dog community to honor the handlers and those that served before them.

"It's an honor for us to be a part of this," said Sgt. Daniel Andrzejewski, kennel master, K9, Provost Marshal's Office. "They've been coming here for years and it's a great time for everyone."

The Dawg Project travels mostly to military installations on the West coast, holding the events for working-dog handlers in every branch of service. They have been traveling and serving since 2008 and their fifth trip marks the 89th event.

"We love coming out here and doing Feed the Dawgs in the stumps," said Jon Hemp, Dawg Project co-founder. "People often forget about the Marines out here, so we make it a point to see these guys. We just want to give back because we know what they go through."

For some of the Combat Center dog handlers, Feed the Dawgs has become a tradition. It's a welcomed break for them and it gives current handlers a link to the past.

"It's awesome to have these old handlers come here," Andrzejewski said. "It's also good for them to see what the program is like now. Now, it's totally different training and the dogs are different."

During the event, old and new members of the K9 community united to revel in their history. They conversed with friends and family and they remembered comrades of the K9 community, past and present. Before they ate, members said a prayer and read off the names of comrades they've lost, from all services, both handlers and working dogs alike.

"It's an honor to come out here and do this event," Hemp said. "Some people complain about having to come out here to 100 degree heat, but we have to remember that we send these guys 9,000 miles away in 112-degree temperature and ask them to put full gear on. So to the complainers, I say 'shut up and show up.' I'm very happy to do this and (the Marines) think it's cool to see a combat veteran throw down a steak for them."



PHOTOS BY CPL. D.J. WU



[Top] Members of The Dawg Project and the Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office K9 unit gathered for the 5th Annual Feed the Dawgs event at the Combat Center K9 kennels Aug. 31.

[Center, Left] Cpl. John Dolezal, military working-dog handler, grabs food during the Feed The Dawgs event. The event linked past and present working-dog handlers for a day of food and laughs.

[Center, Right] Jon Hemp, co-founder, The Dawgs Project, says a few words to attendees remembering comrades they've lost.

[Bottom] Ryan Carr, military working-dog handler, trades stories with Jon Hemp about how their lives have been since their last Feed the Dawgs event together.



Oasis

A hidden desert

Local nature preserve hosts unique environment

Tucked away in the Little San Bernardino Mountains is a unique desert oasis known as the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. This lush landscape is one of the 10 largest cottonwood and willow riparian habitats in California and located approximately 30 miles from the Combat Center. The preserve is 31,000 acres and consists of elevations ranging from 600 feet on the canyon floor to 3,000 feet at the top of the ridge. It is also a natural habitat for animals including mule deer, desert big horn sheep and bobcats.

Photos by Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimilis



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BLOOD DRIVE

By Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

Service members bleed for a cause

Blood, the fluid of our life. It is a fuel on which our bodies rely, yet some people feel compelled to allow it to be pulled from their limbs. A shiny silver needle is dug into the largest vein in their arm, as they are forced to watch the thick red liquid travel through a previously clear plastic tubing, filling up crimson pouches that pump like a raw, beating heart. You might get cold, you might get nauseated, and if it comes to it, you might fall to the floor, unconscious.

The first time I donated blood, I was a sophomore in high school. At the age of 16, I was the youngest I could be to donate. My motivation? My belief that it was for a good cause. I also had the same thought as the other students; getting pricked with a needle was worth getting out of class. I'm really not a big fan of needles, with the exception of tattoo enthusiasts, I wouldn't know anyone who is. But truly, the idea of donating blood to those in need, for me, was worth fighting my fear of needles. That day helped teach me to be selfless.

Recently, Desert **Blood Services** brought their **Bloodmobile** (cue the Batman theme song) to the parking lot of Fort Sill National Bank for a **blood drive**. Having donated multiple times in the past, I opted to volunteer. The fact that I would donate right before a weekend meant I wouldn't have to worry about passing out during physical training the next day.

I left in the morning, after eating a healthy breakfast and drinking plenty of water. As I approached the doors of the **Bloodmobile**, I wondered to myself how many volunteers would be donating today, and for what reasons.

I was greeted by two blood-services technicians, with four more present, preparing for unsuspecting donors. One Marine lay motionless at a donation station, wearing boots and utilities, almost as if he were running a combat fitness test, if it included a **blood-draw** portion. He held a silver needle in his arm and a red stress ball in the shape of a heart in hand. He gave me a faint smile, and the thought of asking if he was okay crossed my mind.

After completing the standard paperwork, I sat down with Kenneth Ellison, a donor services specialist with **Desert Blood Services**, for my initial assessment.

According to Kenneth, a portion of the blood collected from donors aboard the Combat Center goes to

vein, disinfecting my skin with an antibacterial wipe and then penetrating my arm with the long, pointy needle.

I've always heard doctors say that the needle entering your skin feels like an ant bite. They must be talking about the safari ants of Africa, because I've been bitten by normal ants many times and there is definitely a difference between those and a thin, **blood-sucking needle**.

I squeezed a stress ball and rolled it around between the fingers of my right hand to keep the blood flowing, simply staring at the ceiling throughout the process. If anything, I was just cold, because I could certainly feel the needle, but not pain. Only the thought that I was a volunteer consciously contributing to helping others.

I listened to the beeps of the small machine that was collecting the **blood**, not knowing what any of them meant until the last one that signaled my completion. One pint of blood had been drawn from my body. One pint of my life force, leaving me like a World of Warcraft character in need of a health potion. I could still walk straight though, so that was good enough.

With a bandaged arm and multiple requirements concerning recovery for the next 24 hours, I went to sit in the rest area for an advised 15 minutes. There I spoke with Lance Cpl. Isaias Favela, an unmanned aerial vehicle maintainer, VMU-1, about his reason for volunteering.

"I try to give **blood** once a year," Favela said. "My mother pushes me to do it."

Like me, Favela donated for the first time when he was a 16-year-old in high school, and also discovered that it was nothing to be afraid of. He too believes it can make a difference.

Ellison said roughly 28 volunteers had shown up this time, which according to him was a "slow drive." Previous visits have usually accumulated between 30 and 45 donors, with the highest in one drive being 125.

I was also curious to know what reservations would-be donors have when it comes to signing up and donating, other than the fact that our service members are almost always busy.

"Part of people's hesitation to donate is usually a fear of needles," said Ellison. "In addition, they usually don't have the true knowledge of donating, so they fear taking that chance."

On the plus side, many donors notice the **Desert Blood Services** message and don't think twice about it.

"The point we try to push is that the **blood** of one donor can save up to three lives," said Ellison. "**Blood** is always something that is needed. It lasts for 48 days, so it does have to be replenished if not used so that it is available."

I then left the **Bloodmobile** holding two things: a tan t-shirt with the words "Oo-rah! I gave blood." I figured to myself it just had to be motivating. I also held a piece of paper advising me that the next time I will be allowed to donate will be Oct. 18. It didn't take me long to decide that despite the fact that my body will be "low on fuel" for a while, **Desert Blood Services** will see me again. I'll be sure to mark my calendar.

One pint of blood can be distributed to save three people or concentrated for one life. A portion of the blood collected at the Combat Center is reserved for patients at Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital.

Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, where it is collectively stored for those on base, should they ever need it.

From Kenneth, I also learned a few physiological facts about giving blood.

"(Donating blood) is healthy because it wakes up bone marrow that may be dormant," Ellison said. "It has to make new blood cells and rejuvenate the iron that you need. It's almost like oil to a car."

It was then time to get right to it. Lying in the donation space, the blood technician began her procedure of finding a good



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Thursday: Karaoke, 8:30 - 10 p.m.
 Friday: DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m.
 Saturday: DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Thursday: Warrior Night, 4:30 - 9 p.m.
 Friday: Karaoke Night, 6 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Monday: Steak Night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
 Wednesday: Wing Special Wednesday, 4:30 - 9 p.m.
 Thursday: Free Happy Hour Food, 5 - 7 p.m.
 Friday: Steak Night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
 DJ Gixxa, 8 - 11 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday: Steak Night, 5 - 7:30 p.m.
 Thursday: Free Pub Grub, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
 Taco Night, 5 - 7 p.m.

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

Local Events

Free Line-Dance Lessons

Learn to dance the night away
 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.

Monty Python's SPAMALOT

A musical based on the comedy movie
 When: 7 p.m., Fridays & Saturdays, Aug. 23 - Sept. 21
 Where: Theatre 29
 73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
 For more information, call 316-4151

Lower Desert

Bill Burr: You are all the same tour

American stand-up comedian performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 7
 Where: Spotlight 29 Casino
 46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
 For more information, call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>

Bobby Vinton

American pop music singer performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 7
 Where: Agua Caliente Casino, Resort and Spa
 32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage, Calif.
 For more information, call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>

Voz De Mando

Regional Mexican group performs
 When: 9 p.m., Friday, Sept. 20
 Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
 49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
 For more information, call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>

Wynonna and the Big Noise

Country music singer performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 21
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio, Calif.
 For more information, call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Sept. 6

8:30 p.m. - The Wolverine 3-D, PG-13
 11:30 p.m. - 2 Guns, R

Saturday, Sept. 7

10:40 a.m. - Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked, G
 12:30 p.m. - Smurfs 2 3-D, PG
 3 p.m. - Turbo 3-D, PG
 5:30 p.m. - The Wolverine 3-D, PG-13
 8:30 p.m. - R.E.D. 2, PG-13
 11:30 p.m. - R.I.P.D., PG-13

Sunday, Sept. 8

12:30 p.m. - Smurfs 2, PG
 3:30 p.m. - Planes, PG
 6 p.m. - Percy Jackson: Sea Monsters 3-D, PG
 9 p.m. - We're the Millers, R

Monday, Sept. 9

7 p.m. - The Wolverine 3-D, PG-13

Tuesday, Sept. 10

7 p.m. - Percy Jackson: Sea Monsters 3-D, PG

Wednesday, Sept. 11

5 p.m. - Planes, PG
 7:30 p.m. - R.E.D. 2, PG-13

Thursday, Sept. 12

5 p.m. - Turbo, PG
 7:30 p.m. - The Conjuring, R

Matt Damon straps on an exo-skeleton as the hero in a new sci-fi saga set in LA



COURTESY PHOTO

NEIL POND

"Elysium"

Starring: Matt Damon & Jodie Foster
 Directed by: Neill Blomkamp
 R, 109 min.

In the not-so-distant future, 140 years from now, Earth has become an overpopulated slum teeming with crime and disease, and those who can afford to flee have fled — to a pristine orbiting paradise called Elysium, a humongous, high-in-the-sky space station with manicured suburban lawns, gleaming mansions, and the technology to instantly cure any injury or disease.

When Max (Matt Damon), one of the Earth-bound grubs who makes his way each morning through the rubble and rabble of Los Angeles to his factory job churning out the robotics that keep Elysium humming, is exposed to a lethal dose of radiation in an industrial accident, it's literally his death sentence. Given five days to live, he knows his only chance is to somehow get to Elysium and one of its heal-anything machines.

But trips there are obscenely expensive, and fraught with risk. Elysium's flinty secretary of defense (Jodie Foster) has been known to order unauthorized incoming shuttles — and their "illegal" immigrant passengers — vaporized as they approach. And anyone who makes it past the space station's heavenly — and heavily defended — portals is deported immediately back to Earth.

Max, however, becomes more than just another Earthling wanting to be made whole again. In exchange for a spot on the shuttle, which he has no way to afford, he

makes a deal with the shady operator: He agrees to undertake an extremely dangerous bit of sabotage that involves stealing encrypted data from the brain of a weasel-y Elysium-connected corporate exec, and to the surgical affixing of a high-tech robotic "exo-suit" that gives him the super-strength he'll need to do the job.

Writer-director Neill Blomkamp, whose "District 9" (2009) was a space-alien tale with stark parallels to the rifts in his native South Africa caused by racial segregation, has created another sci-fi parable with charged political and social overtones. It's impossible to miss the themes of health and medical care only for those who can afford it, a society in which many jobs have been taken over by compassionless robots, and a "utopia" that repels undesirables seeking a better life.

Alice Braga plays one of Max's childhood friends, Frey, now grown up with a child of her own, a young daughter dying of leukemia. Sharlto Copley, who starred as the hero of "District 9," sinks his teeth into the role of a vicious mercenary with an arsenal of dirty tricks, assigned to keep Max from following through on his mission, a task that's soon shown to have implications far beyond simply curing his own radiation poisoning.

"Elysium" is an impressive bit of moviemaking, especially as a one-man show for its writer-director, who's done all by himself what other movies, especially movies of this scale, sometimes require teams of collaborators to manage.

This is his vision, his story, his execution, and Blomkamp has delivered a picture that easily stands as one of the best sci-fi flicks of the summer, a ripping, gripping fable about two worlds in a dreary future that, unsettlingly, doesn't seem as far out of synch with today, or as far away, as we might like to think.

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