



[Above] 1st Sgt. Jairo Fredonis, weapons company first sergeant, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, embraces his wife, Monique during a homecoming at Del Valle Field, March 22. The homecoming welcomed Marines and sailors with 3/7, after a seven-month combat deployment to Afghanistan.



[Left] Family, friends and Marines of 3/7 await the arrival of their loved ones at Del Valle Field, March 22. While deployed, Marines and sailors with 3/7 combined efforts with the Afghan National Security Forces, preparing them to take the lead in counter-insurgency operations.

'Cutting Edge' receives warm welcome from families, friends

Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock
 Combat Correspondent

Four companies with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, returned to the Combat Center after a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, March 22.

Family, friends and fellow Marines awaited the arrival of their loved ones at Del Valle field where the homecoming was staged. Prior to the arrival, signs depicting those returning as well as flags waving could be seen as they prepared to embrace their service member.

"This is the first homecoming I have been to, and it was absolutely amazing," said Lean Guckian, sister of Lance Cpl. Seth Guckian. "It was all kind of overwhelming, but everything was very well organized and it was a great experience."

While deployed, Marines and sailors with 3/7 com-

bined efforts with the Afghan National Security Forces, preparing them to take the lead in counter-insurgency operations.

"We were the holders of Sangin," said 1st Sgt. Jairo Fredonis, weapons company first sergeant. "We were charged with keeping the forward operating base open for stability in that district working alongside the Afghan National Security Forces."

As the Marines and sailors marched up to Del Valle Field, families and friends bared a look of enjoyment at the site of their loved ones.

"It's always very exciting to see the Marines and sailors coming home," said Andrea Tatayon, family readiness officer, 3/7. "There is a lot of different logistical aspects to set up these homecomings, and we were thankful to have a lot of help from our sister bat-

It's always very exciting to see the Marines and sailors coming home."

— Andrea Tatayon

See **HOMECOMING**, A6

Little Patriots visit MCAGCC

Lance Cpl. Charles Santamaria
 Combat Correspondent

Children rushed toward the stage after the performance reached its peak. They listened attentively as the performer belted famous contemporary hits. She invited several of the kids from the crowd on stage to participate in the performance and make them part of the experience. Smiles covered each of the children's faces as they joined in on songs from contemporary artists and danced alongside Lexie Saal, a singer and song writer from New York, during the concert of the Little Patriots Embraced Military Youth Fitness & Music Tour, Saturday.

The event was held at Del Valle Field where coordinators encouraged fitness with a run and walk around the track, games and events for children to participate in. Lexie Saal's performance concluded the event.

"We travel the country to visit military bases and give our thanks to military families for everything they do," said Carol Watanabe, founder and

"We travel the country to visit military bases and give our thanks."

— Carol Watanabe

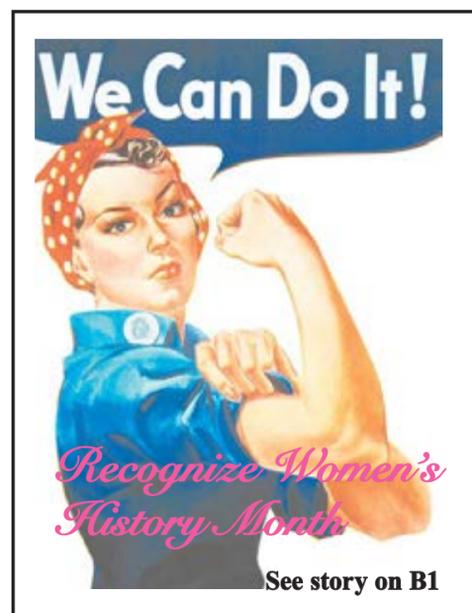
executive director, LPE. "The tour encourages youth fitness with different stations that keep them in motion and ended with a great performance from Lexie Saal."

The event was for family members of all ages and provided a great opportunity for families to be outside and enjoy their day.

"I think the main focus of this program was to have the kids enjoy their time with their family, so it was a great recreational event especially for families of Marines and sailors who are deployed," said Celina Laserna, special events coordinator, Marine Corps Community Services, "The Marines who volunteered were fantastic and I could tell by the looks on the children's faces that they were having a good time."

LPE will visit 15 military bases of all branches by the end of the nationwide tour, but the coordinators are looking forward to increasing

See **PATRIOTS**, A6



See **story on B1**

ASYMCA dress giveaway prepares girls for dance

Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
 Combat Correspondent

Families aboard the Combat Center were presented an opportunity to receive a dress courtesy of the Armed Services YMCA during a dress giveaway at the ASYMCA building, March 21.

The ASYMCA works to make military life easier for the Marines, sailors, and families aboard the Combat Center. They are committed to strengthening the military community through events and social programs.

The giveaway came in anticipation of the Marine Corps Community Services' Father-Daughter Dance slated to be held today. Dresses of various colors and types made for a broad selection of style.

"Here we can alleviate a little of the stress in getting ready for a big event, especially here where shopping opportunities can be so limited," said

Laura Scotto, special events and volunteer coordinator, ASYMCA. "We wanted to help out and give a thank you to the families."

According to Scotto, the event was organized as a spin-off of the annual Belle of the Ball dress giveaway for Combat Center spouses. A proposal to sponsor a giveaway for daughters was green-lit in anticipation of the upcoming dance.

Parents arrived with girls whom gleefully smiled at the dress options before them, and shared the excitement.

"I decided to take advantage of this opportunity because it saved money and travel," said Tabitha Guzman, Marine spouse, whom received a dress for her daughter, Danika, 2. "I'm glad the ASYMCA does things like this because it helps out families who need it. We are excited about the dance."

The dresses came from various

See **DRESS**, A6



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Students take on Sergeants' Course

Cpl. Ali Azimi
 Combat Correspondent

Part of the Marine Corps non-commissioned officer's responsibilities is to teach and mentor their Marines to one day become leaders. It is a task that insures the future of the Corps and the United States. During this week, a class full of sergeants were given the opportunity to go a few steps further and pass on their leadership skills to a class of local students, Tuesday.

Students with the Association Student

Students with the Association Student Body leadership class at Twentynine Palms Junior High School step into formation during their visit to the Combat Center's Sergeants' Course, Tuesday. The class was here to learn more about leadership from Marines.

Body leadership class at Twentynine Palms Junior High School visited the Combat Center's Sergeant's Course to reinforce the ideals being taught at their school.

The class is made of students from different grades six through eight, and is structured to mold students into leaders. As part of their curriculum, they were introduced to the class of sergeants undergoing their training.

"They wanted to see what we do at our course," said Staff Sgt. John Witt, chief faculty advisor, Sergeants

See **STUDENTS**, A6

Marine Corps, Japan hold Reunion of Honor at battle site

Cpl. Jose Lujano
III Marine Expeditionary Force

The Government of Japan and the U.S. Marine Corps conducted the Reunion of Honor ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Iwo Jima, March 19, at Iwo To, formerly known as Iwo Jima.

During the 69th commemoration, Comandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos, Japanese and U.S. veterans, distinguished guests, Marines and sailors from III Marine Expeditionary Force, and leaders from both nations paid respect to those who fought and those who lost their lives during the battle.

Every year to commemorate the battle of Iwo Jima, the Iwo Jima Association invites veterans of the battle, along with other interested guests, to the battle site on the island.

The guests, numbering 500-600, fly in and out on the same day. They disembark the aircraft, are shuttled to the ceremony site, conduct the ceremony, and have time to reflect on their memories on the island.

Some guests walk the beaches or climb to Mt. Suribachi – where Joe Rosenthal's iconic photo of the Iwo Jima flag raising was taken. The Marine Corps supports the event with the III Marine Expeditionary Force Band, officials and logistics.

Japanese veterans of the war also attended the event, along with their guests. The Japanese band and Japanese defense officials took part in the American ceremony. Veterans from both sides reunited and had a chance to share memories. Every year is special because of the Iwo veterans that are able to make it to the event, which is something that won't be continued much longer.



CPL. ANN HENRY

[Above] Kurt Tong, left, retired Lt. Gen. Lawrence F. Snowden, center, and Gen. James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, pay respects at the Reunion of Honor memorial March 19, in Iwo To, Japan.



CPL. JOSE LUJANO

[Left] Japanese distinguished guests lay a wreath during the annual Reunion of Honor ceremony, March 19. This year's ceremony commemorated the 69th Anniversary of the battle on Iwo To, formerly known as Iwo Jima, Japan.

Martial Arts Instructors Course

March 31 - April 18

Students who complete the course will be a minimum of a green belt instructor. Students must be a corporal or above with a grey belt.

Location: Martial Arts Facility, Building 1652
For more information, contact
Staff Sgt. Fulgencio at 830-0290

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

BRAYDEN KOLT TILLER
Born on: March 5, 2014
Born to: Tristan and Kylie Tiller

RYAN RAY GOLDTOOTH
Born on: March 7, 2014
Born to: Stephen and Shelbi Goldtooth

MARILYN ANN-ELIZABETH SEILER
Born on: March 8, 2014
Born to: Sloan and Kathryn Seiler

SAYURI SALAZAR
Born on: March 13, 2014
Born to: Fabian and Yayoi Salazar

JAMES DWIGHT HELTEN
Born on: March 13, 2014
Born to: Joshua and Shannon Helten

CADENCE OLIVIA BIBBINS
Born on: March 14, 2014
Born to: Dwight and Maureen Bibbins

KAIDEN MALONE COLEMAN-BATTLE
Born on: March 16, 2014
Born to: Larry and Alexis Battle

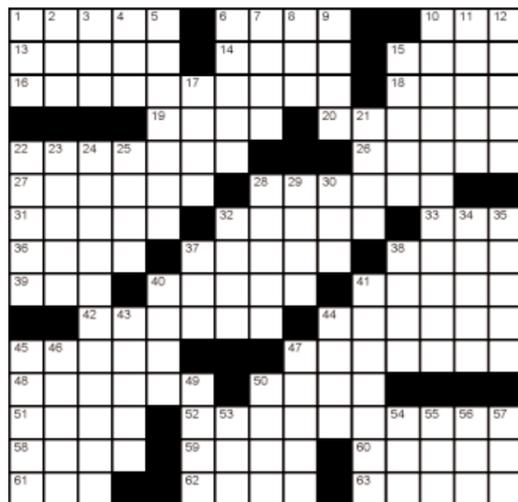
"I'VE GOT A QUESTION FOR YA"

See answers on page A6

- Across**
- 1 Chomps out of a cheeseburger
 - 6 Cheese used in Greek salads
 - 10 Baby's cry
 - 13 Earth tone
 - 14 State to be true
 - 15 "Whoops!"
 - 16 Question from the lost
 - 18 The latest crazes
 - 19 Letters between J and O
 - 20 Country great ____ West
 - 22 Members of an Indian tribe in Oklahoma
 - 26 Cut, as wood
 - 27 Not on the sea
 - 28 Eye part
 - 31 Places to store tools
 - 32 FDR's affliction
 - 33 ____-no camera
 - 36 Cash register section
 - 37 Question from the unlucky
 - 38 Simmered food
 - 39 "What else?"
 - 40 Long stories
 - 41 Patriot ____ Allen
 - 42 At a discount
 - 44 Bacon remains
 - 45 Was a witness
 - 47 Lured
 - 48 Items to be discussed at a meeting

- 50 Type of 22-tube shapes
- 51 Oak or apple
- 52 Question from someone who hears a knock at the door
- 58 Animal that's a symbol of Russia
- 59 Use your eyes
- 60 Modern communication
- 61 "However..."
- 62 School year pts.
- 63 Dalmatian or leopard features

- Down**
- 1 Respond to the audience clapping
 - 2 I, in Germany
 - 3 Most common word in English
 - 4 Make a mistake
 - 5 They look for those who are hiding
 - 6 Where food is grown
 - 7 Like the numbers 2 and 4
 - 8 Drag behind
 - 9 Amazed
 - 10 Question from those who've heard a loud noise
 - 11 Actress MacDowell
 - 15 Frequently



- 17 Protected from the wind
- 21 Cleveland's state
- 22 Italian food
- 23 Pale
- 24 Question from the hungry
- 25 Indicates "yes"
- 28 Rolls-____ (fancy car)
- 29 Common 51-Acrosses
- 30 It's worn with a suit
- 32 TV's Dr. ____
- 34 Rent
- 35 Was in possession of
- 37 FDR project
- 38 Put one foot in front of the other
- 40 Abbr. on a building's cornerstone
- 41 Animals with pretty fur
- 43 Gold Rush participant
- 44 "____ clue!"
- 45 Did nothing to interfere
- 46 See it the same way
- 47 Clock sounds
- 49 Hole-making tools
- 50 Rocket ship's sound
- 53 Tool with a long handle
- 54 Mischief maker
- 55 "The ____ of Pooh"
- 56 Small amount
- 57 Ernie of golf

SUDOKU 3220 M

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In Oceanside:

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

In San Diego:

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

In National City:

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

In Twentynine Palms:

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

Katie

Huntington Beach, Calif. electronics specialist, Base Exchange, 32

WALKER



LANCE CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

- > **I eventually want to** get my A+ certification and work for a technology company. National Cash Register, would be my ideal job.
- > **I've never had** a planned path. My life has always been random and that's how I like it.
- > **People have asked me,** "What are you?" I don't know what I am, I'm whatever I want to be on any given day. I never pictured myself in a geek role, but now I absolutely love it.
- > **I'm all about doing** what makes you happy. Don't feel that you have to fit into anyone's outline of what they think you should be. I have been through a lot in my life and learned a lot from trial and error. I always say a phoenix has nothing on me. I've always risen no matter what.
- > **I don't know where** I want to end up or where I'm going to. I would really love to work with all aspects of computers and stay around Southern California.
- > **I have a really** creative mind, I'm really a "do it yourself" kind of person. I like crafting, not in the traditional sense like making doilies, but I like making a lot of music-related art. I constantly have my eye out for it. When I look at things, I see it from an artistic point of view and I think what can I make of this? What can I turn this into?
- > **My passion for music** has inspired a lot of my tattoos that are a collection of a lot of random things, from random artists. A lot of people put a lot of thoughts into their tattoos and try to make sense of them. For me, it's just kind of like this is fun and makes me happy so let's do it.

Interviewed by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock March 12, 2014

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3/4 Fun in the Sun

Marines celebrate last family day

Lance Cpl. Charles Santamaria
Combat Correspondent

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, hosted their final family day at the Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21.

The unit's family day consisted of several events for both the children and adults of the family. Bouncy houses, an inflatable obstacle course, horseshoes, and a golf tournament for Marines to compete in, were made available to all in attendance.

"I've been with 3/4 since 2010, both as a spouse and a Family Readiness Officer, so it definitely feels like a family to me," said Heidi Harting, family readiness officer, 3/4. "It's our last family day and we really wanted to go all out so we brought out the rock-climbing wall from Outdoor Adventures, brought multiple inflatable houses, a dunk tank and a golf tournament for the Marines to compete in."

Toward the deactivation of 3/4, it becomes easier to reflect on what the unit has accomplished and some of the obstacles families have been through.

"3/4 is the most deployed infantry battalion to combat zones during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit just came back from their last deployment October, 2013," Harting said. "Military families are resilient and through all the struggle and hardship that comes with seeing their family and friends deploy to combat every moment."

"It's a bitter sweet time for the families and Marines," Harting said. "But it's nice to see the Marines and their families having a good time. It's good to know that this family day added some joy to their day and gave them a place to just have fun."

Spouses who have worked as volunteers in the 3/4 community have been phenomenal and their willingness to help each other has added to how close the unit is as a whole, according to Harting.

"In my time here, I've witnessed how much pride the 'Darkside' Marines have in their unit, what they do and Marines who they have lost," Harting said. "They carry it with them always and it's been life-changing for me to work with Marines like this."

zones, we have pulled through together as one."

Marines leaving to other units look back on things they will miss and what they're looking forward to in the future.

"It was a good unit while it lasted and I got a lot of great training while I was with this unit which prepared me well for the future," said Cpl. Harrison Leeper, intelligence specialist, 3/4. "It's great to be going to another unit and trying something new, but the deployments with these Marines have left me with great memories."

The event featured an 18-hole golf competition where Marines of all ranks went head-to-head in teams of four. The family day left the participants with mixed feelings, but Marines and their families cherished

every moment.

"It's a bitter sweet time for the families and Marines," Harting said. "But it's nice to see the Marines and their families having a good time. It's good to know that this family day added some joy to their day and gave them a place to just have fun."

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"It's nice to see the Marines and families having a good time."

— Heidi Harting

[Top, right] Abiageal Brisendine, 3, gets a painting of her favorite design on her arm during the unit's final family day hosted at Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21.

[Center, right] Families of 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines participate in a rock-climbing wall event during the unit's final family day hosted at Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21. The unit also hosted their own golf tournament for the Marines to participate in.

[Bottom, right] Marines and sailors with 3/4 serve themselves food during the unit's final family day held at Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21. The unit's family day consisted of several events for both the children and adults in attendance.

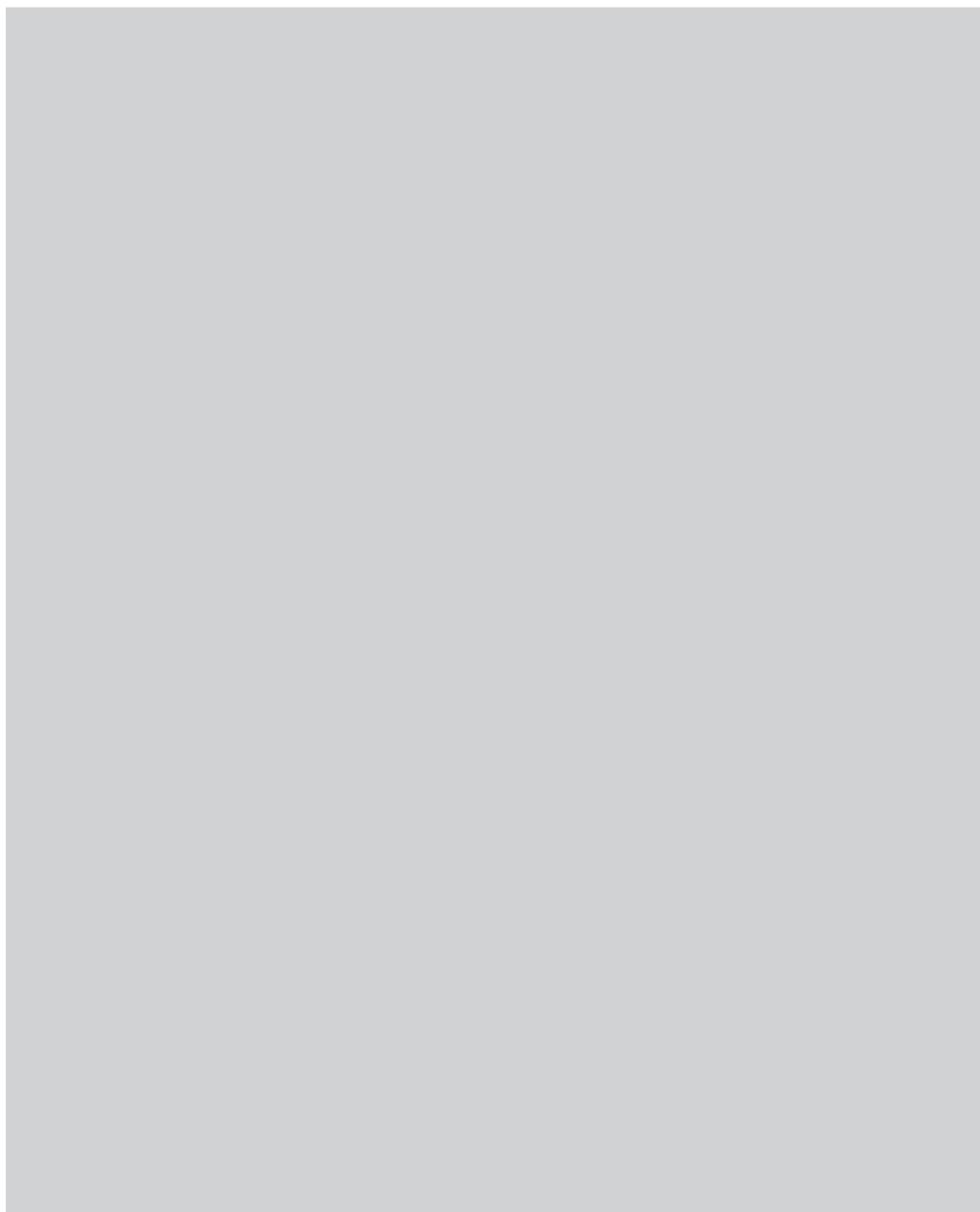


PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

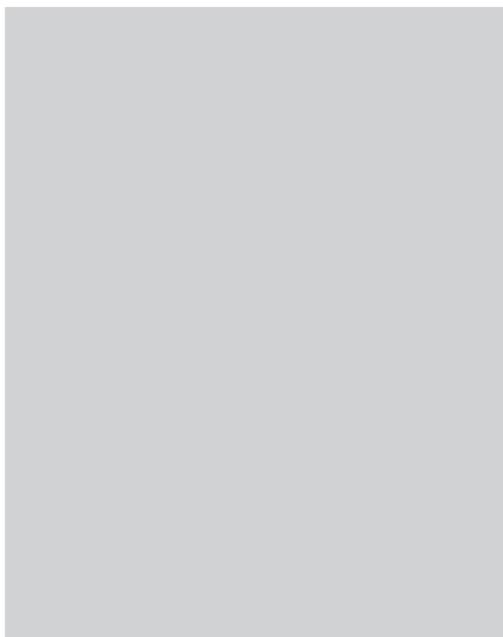


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'DARKSIDE'

Golf Tournament

Photos by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock

Approximately 70 Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, participated in the 3/4 Commander's Cup at Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21. The golf tournament was a part of 3/4's family day, which will be the last family day before the unit deactivates. All 'Darkside' Marines were allowed to participate in the tournament. The tournament consisted of 18 holes.



[Top, left] Cpl. Zachary Leeds, rifleman, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, practices putting prior to the 3/4 Commander's Cup at Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21. Approximately 70 Marines and sailors from the battalion participated in the tournament.

[Left] Cpl. Jacob Gadberry, machine gunner, 3/4, warms up prior to the 3/4 Commander's Cup at Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21. The tournament players competed in teams of four, and were scored through 18 holes.

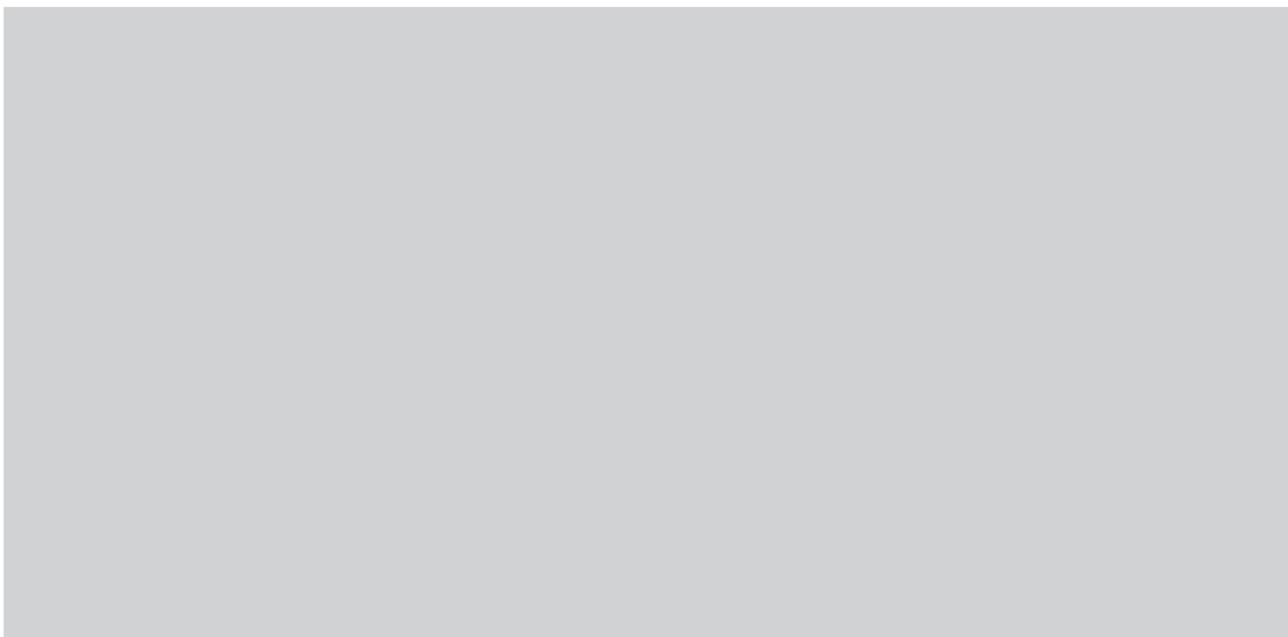
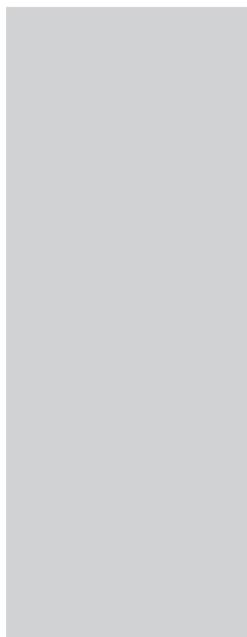
[Above] Cpl. Zachary Leeds, rifleman, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, hits a ball out of the sand during the 3/4 Commander's Cup at the Desert Winds Golf Course, March 21. The tournament was part of the unit's final family day, with the unit slated to deactivate this summer.

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STUDENTS, from A1

Course. "We've done things in the past with students, from junior high to college. They get to see what these Marines go through. It helps them correlate what they will be doing in their own class."

The students started with a crash course about the Marine Corps and Marine leaders. Witt briefed them on what is expected of sergeants in the Corps and at the course. As he explained their regular training plan and the physical fitness, many of the students expressed surprise at the strict physical standards expected of Marines.

"The knowledge of leadership we wanted to impart on the students was that as a Marine, leadership is not just one thing," Witt said. "One thing by itself will not make you a leader. You can be great in academics, physical fitness and discipline, but what makes a great leader is a well-rounded Marine."

From there, the students were led into a room where they met the NCOs of the current course during a discussion focused on leadership and professional ethics. The junior high students observed their discussion and soon joined in with questions for the Marines.

"It was good to hear them talk about what leadership really is," said Hannah Boss, student, ASB leadership class. "You hear so many things and it's good to get their take on it."

After the discussion, the group shifted from theory to practice as the NCOs and students stepped outside for drill.

"We wanted them to watch how a sergeant of Marines gets out of his formation as a leader and takes charge, so the students can see what goes into that," Witt said. "We wanted to give them a few different views of these sergeants in leadership roles, whether its socratic discussion or getting out in front of actual platoons and marching them."

The sergeants marched up and down the parking garage across from their schoolhouse with their voices echoing through the structure. The junior high students watched from a distance until they believed they had a handle on it.

They split up and inserted themselves into the separate platoons, filling in any empty spaces in the ranks. However, soon the sergeants were instructing individual students to lead the platoons and the students stepped up to call cadence.

After their turn at drill, the students' day of leadership training with the sergeants came to an end as they returned to their bus and said goodbye to their Marine counterparts.

"I thought it was awesome," said Terry Burdett, leadership teacher and ASB leadership advisor. "I think the kids are going to walk away with a lot of good memories and more leadership skills than they came in with."



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Students with the Association Student Body leadership class at Twentynine Palms Junior High School listen to a presentation on leadership during a visit to the Combat Center's Sergeants' Course, Tuesday. The students were introduced to Marine sergeants undergoing the course.

HOMECOMING, from A1

talion, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines. It makes it all worth it to see the families reunited with their loved ones."

Upon the Marines and sailors arrival, a time to reflect on their deployment and look forward to their next operation will be allotted.

"We have a great sense of accomplishment after this deployment," said Lt. Col. Daniel Wittnam, battalion commander, 3/7. "All of our Marines, especially our young non-commissioned officers, made great choices over there, worked really hard, and came home with our honor clean."

With all of 3/7 back on American soil, the battalion will continue to train, as Marines and sailors do, for their next call to action.

DRESS, from A1

donors, to include churches and families in the community, according to Scotto.

"We hope events like [the dance] continue and get a good turnout, and to help families in events like this for years to come," Scotto said.

PATRIOTS, from A1

the frequency of the tour. Some challenges came with traveling across country for the group, but their determination to make the tour happen for bases all over the United States overcame any obstacle that came their way.

"There's always challenges that come with traveling but this is just the beginning," Watanabe said. "The

Combat Center is only our second base on the tour and we just want to let everyone on this base know that we thank them for everything they do for our country. We hope that our tour grows every year and that we can reach even more families with each visit to make their day with their family something to remember."

For more information on the Little Patriots program visit LittlePatriotsEmbraced.org.



LANCE CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

Andre Madrid, 12, brother of Lance Cpl. Krystian Madrid, intelligence specialist, Headquarters Company, 7th Marine Regiment, races to win the Bungee Race game during the Little Patriots Embraced Youth Tour event held at Del Valle Field, March 22.

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

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

LOOKING for local entertainment?

See page B2 for our **LIBERTY CALL** section



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Marines conduct Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Forward Operating Base

Cpl. Joseph Scanlan
Combat Correspondent

A vehicle convoy stirred the air with dust as Marines with Weapons Co., 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, departed Camp Leatherneck, March 13.

As the battalion prepared to take control of the battle space controlled by 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, the company conducted a partnered Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Forward Operating Base Juno with Afghan National Security Forces to prepare themselves for potential future operations.

"The MRX was an opportunity to take the company outside of the wire with support of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, who has been doing our mission set," said 2nd Lt. Matt Stelmach, platoon commander, Weapons Co., 1/7. "It was also an opportunity to go outside the wire and rehearse what we are actually going to be doing on missions."

Although it was a training mission, each Marine carried a full combat load of ammunition due to the constant threat of improvised explosive devices and enemy aggression outside of friendly lines. The infantrymen had prepared for this deployment during rigorous training exercises throughout the past 12 months in Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif and Yuma, Ariz.,. The MRX was their final test before they assumed control of the battle space.

"In a lot of the training we do, everything is an IED and every guy is a bad guy, but it's not like that at all in Afghanistan," said Cpl. Jake Meyer, lead vehicle commander, Weapons Co., 1/7. "There are farmers, shop owners and people that are just trying to get paid to do their normal, daily jobs so they can go home to their family at night. When Marines first get here, they can think everything is suspicious, every plastic jug they see is an IED, and every guy wearing black is Taliban. The MRX really helps give Marines that experience so they can focus on what

behaviors to look for."

The convoy exited Camp Leatherneck and traveled northwest to FOB Juno, an Afghan National Army base. They were briefed on potential vehicle-borne IED threats in the area prior to leaving the wire.

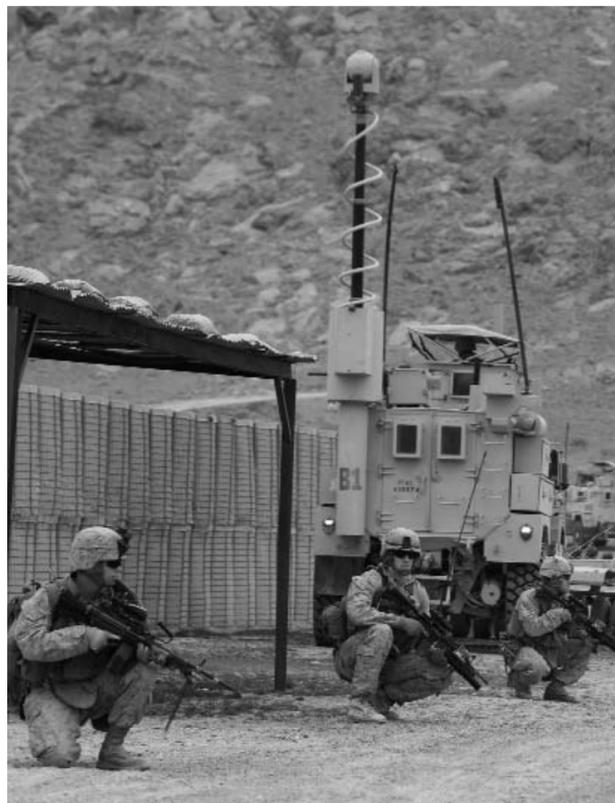
"I was a vehicle commander during my previous deployment to Afghanistan," Meyer said. "There is a lot of stress involved with planning the route and finding the best routes to travel, but I like being responsible for ensuring everyone behind me takes a safe route. I have to constantly be aware of the threat outside of the wire as far as vehicles, motorcycles, terrain we move across and IEDs. IEDs are not everywhere, but they can be anywhere."

After arriving at FOB Juno, the infantrymen cordoned off three objectives with vehicles. Marine assault elements provided security around the objectives as ANSF cleared the area of hostile threats.

"Generally speaking, the assault element is ultimately the main effort on missions," Stelmach said. "When we work with Afghan National Security Forces, they are the main effort. It was a great opportunity to work with them to make sure they can conduct their operations."

The Afghans ultimately cleared each objective, and the Marines headed back to Camp Leatherneck shortly after. Although a route may have been safe during the initial travel, it may not be safe during the return trip, so the Marines traveled along a different route on their way back. The convoy returned to Camp Leatherneck safely, and the battalion is now preparing for real, potential future operations.

On March 15, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, officially took over the battle space. Their mission is to conduct limited offensive operations, security force assistance to defeat enemy forces throughout their battle space, and set conditions for the transfer of full security responsibility to ANSF in Helmand Province.



PHOTOS BY CPL. JOSEPH SCANLAN

[Above] Marines with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, provide security during a Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Forward Operating Base Juno, Afghanistan, March 13. The MRX was a training mission to help prepare the infantrymen for potential future operations.

[Left] A Marine with Weapons Co., 1/7, provides security during an MRX at FOB Juno, Afghanistan, March 13. The Marines traveled to FOB Juno and provided security on three objectives while Afghan National Security Forces cleared the area of notional hostile threats.

[Below] Cpl. Jesus Garza, fuel truck operator, Headquarters and Support Company, 1/7, refuels a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle during an MRX at FOB Juno, Afghanistan, March 13.



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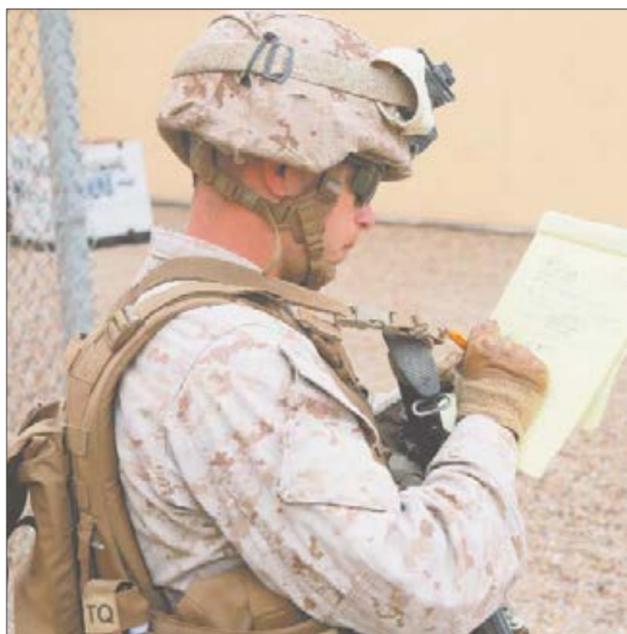


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WeekINPhotos

1st Battalion, 7th Marines



PHOTOS BY CPL. JOSEPH SCANLAN

[Top, left] Navy corpsmen with Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, treat simulated casualties at a muster point during a training drill aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 14. The battalion had Navy corpsmen with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, evaluate the service members as they reacted to the situation.

[Bottom, left] Capt. John Dove, commanding officer, H&S Co., 1/7, evaluates Navy corpsmen as they treat simulated casualties during a training drill aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 14.

[Right] Marines and Navy corpsmen with H&S Co., 1/7, evacuate a simulated casualty during a training drill aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 14. The drill was designed to ensure accountability of all personnel and gear while practicing movement to muster locations in the event of an emergency. "I think it was vital to establish a baseline of our reactions," said Petty Officer 1st Class Jeson Hall, corpsman, 1/7.

Whatever you're looking for, you can find it in the [Observation Post Classified section](#)



The Molly Marine



Story by Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis

Many male Marines are unaware of the significance and history behind the title 'Molly Marine.' As an award now presented only within the confines of 4th Battalion, Recruit Training Regiment, aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., it is no wonder to find that it has remained an unintentionally well-kept secret among female Marines.

Some time before heading off to boot camp, I learned from a female recruiter what it meant to be a Molly Marine. As it was explained to me, this is the recruit who best demonstrates the mentality of taking care of those to her left and to her right, who sacrifices when needed, and who always looks out for her peers by putting others first. In addition to earning the title of United States Marine, this was an achievement I wanted to obtain.

The Molly Marine award is presented by the Woman Marine's Association to one recruit, chosen by her peers, in each graduating platoon that has demonstrated qualities of an exemplary Marine, according to the WMA website.

Molly Marine was originally a statue, symbolizing of the honor tied to serving as a female Marine before it was an award. The first statue was dedicated Nov. 10, 1943, the year the women's reserve was activated and also the day of the Marine Corps' 168th birthday, according to the WMA website. In 1943, in the middle of World War II, Marine Technical Sgt. Charles Gresham, a recruiter, needed a way to promote the enlistment of females into the Marine Corps. He decided on a statue of a woman in uniform.

Since 1969, active-duty female Marines have been chosen to be decorated with the honor being a Molly Marine. The awards were originally made to honor graduates of the Woman Officer Basic Course and the Woman Marine NCO Leadership Course as well as to the most exemplary recruit in each graduation platoon, with selection based on personality, ability to get along with others, attitude and decorum.

While in recruit training, I quickly grasped the concept that this selfless mentality of doing what was best for all, as opposed to



The original Molly Marine statue was sculpted by French artist Enrique Alferez and dedicated Nov. 10, 1943, the year the women's reserve was activated, and also the Corps' 168th birthday, in New Orleans, La.

doing what was best for me, was the pulse and spirit of not just surviving but excelling during such a trying endeavor. It wasn't a dedication to be practiced by an elite few within the platoon. It was the commitment that bonded us in our new-found sisterhood and our foundation in becoming life-long members of the few and the proud. While I may have facilitated some of the support within our platoon, I strived to empower my fellow recruits by giving them the same support with which they provided me.

At the time, I was 23 years old, so perhaps my age allowed me to take on the experience of recruit training with a more steady hand, but I think that in becoming more concerned with the development and well-being of the women around me, I was distracted from my own struggles. So in truth, they helped me far more than I helped them.

By my actions, I was chosen by our senior drill instructor to be our platoon leader, the guide. But more important to me, at the end of it all, I was chosen by my peers, by my sisters, to be our platoon's Molly Marine. It was no land-slide vote. In fact, two other girls had nearly the same amount of tallies as I, but along with becoming a Marine, this was among my most proud of achievements and a precedence set for the rest of my career.

With the recognition, I was given my first challenge coin and a modestly framed photo of the Molly Marine statue, a proud and iconic image shared by all female Marines.

Molly Marine statues have also been erected at Quantico, Parris Island and the National Museum of the Marine Corps as symbols of not only the pioneers of female Marines enlisting in the Corps, but of the dedication and commitment, which has been made to one another and the Corps for more than 70 years.

Female Marines such as Opha May Johnson, the first female to enlist in the Corps, and Margaret A. Brewer, the Corps' first female general officer not only paved the way for female Marines, they also joined the same prestigious ranks as historic women like Joan of Arc, who led the resistance to the English invasion of France; Susan B. Anthony, who was considered to be the 19th Century woman's movement's most powerful organizer; and Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister. These women have all embodied the same courage, perseverance and honor as embodied by Corps' illustrious title of Molly Marine.



On Feb. 13, 1943, the Marine Corps officially established the Marine Corps Women's Reserve.

Liberty Call



Combat Center Events

March Madness

All games and top standings can be viewed at the 5th Street Zone. The Marine or sailor with the top scoring bracket will win a prize.

When: March 16 - April 7

Where: 5th Street Zone

For more information, call 830-4767

Bunny Bowling

Registration is open at the Community Center now through April 11. The event is open to all active duty, retirees, MCCS employees and their families.

When: March 3 - April 11

Where: Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center

For more information, call 830-3910

Chief's Show and Shine

Have an evening of cool drinks and cool cars with the performance of The Burning Rome at 1 and 3 p.m. The event is free of charge to attend.

When: April 12

Where: Hashmarks Parking Lot

For more information, call 830-5086

Coping with Work and Family Stress

This workshop will cover a wide range of active coping skills and ways to make better use of social networks.

Where: Bldg. 1530, Classroom 303

When: Tues. 2 - 3:30 p.m. and Thurs. 9 - 10:30 a.m.

For more information, call 830-5035

For more events, visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>

Sunset Cinema

Friday, March 28

6 p.m. - The Monuments Men, PG-13

8:30 p.m. - Winter's Tale PG-13

11:30 p.m. - Non-Stop, PG-13

Saturday, March 29

10:00 a.m. - Free Admission Alice in Wonderland, PG

1 p.m. - The LEGO Movie, PG

3:30 p.m. - Son of God, PG-13

6:30 p.m. - Endless Love, PG-13

9 p.m. - About Last Night, R

11:30 p.m. - RoboCop, PG-13

Sunday, March 30

12 p.m. - Pompeii, PG-13

2 p.m. - Free Admission The Avengers, PG-13

5 p.m. - SNEAK PREVIEW Captain America: The Winter Soldier 3-D, PG-13

8:30 p.m. - 3 Days to Kill, PG-13

Monday, March 31

6 p.m. - RoboCop, PG -13

Tuesday, April 1

5 p.m. - Pompeii 3-D, PG-13

7:30 p.m. - Non-Stop, PG-13

Wednesday, April 2

6 p.m. - The Monuments Men, PG-13

Thursday, April 3

5 p.m. - The LEGO Movie, PG

7 p.m. - Endless Love, PG-13



Vroom for improvement

NEIL POND
"Need For Speed"

Starring Aaron Paul, Dominic Cooper & Imogene Poots

Directed by Scott Waugh

PG-13, 132 min.

"This ain't just about racing," says one of the characters in "Need For Speed" in a conversation that scrapes momentarily up against something other than what the rest of the movie is all about.

OK, if you want to be picky, you might also say it's about love, rivalry and retribution, and the Cinderella story of a young mechanic, Tobey Marshall (Aaron Paul of TV's "Breaking Bad"), out to save his family business and clear his name.

But let's cut the crap — it's really about racing. It's the movie version of a popular videogame about fast cars and the adrenaline junkies who push them beyond limits any sane person would consider normal.

There's a suped-up, 900-hp 2015 Mustang GT, a Lamborghini, a McLaren and several other exotic pieces of world-class automotive muscle. There are also airplanes, helicopters, goons with guns, and things going on road, off road, into the air, and in one memorable scene, over the side of a deliriously high desert cliff.

If all that gets your saliva glands glistening, well, this big, grinding gear-fest is made for you. The folks at Disney are hoping you won't notice it's basically a low-wattage clone of the wildly successful "Fast & Furious" franchise, the seventh installment of which opens next month with Vin Diesel and The Rock.

Disney surely must be turning a big blind mouse-eye to the fact that everything in this movie glorifies an illegal, dangerous activity, and that even its "good guys" show no regard for the lives of the innocent bystanders they imperil, whether they're plowing around a poky school bus full of kids or smashing into a homeless man's shopping cart as he pushes it across a city street — then laughing about it.

Michael Keaton plays the manic promoter of an invitation-only, secret-location race to which only the best drivers get invited. Tobey's foil is a stinking rich piece of car-collecting Euro-trash (Dominic Cooper). There's a token female (Imogene Poots), who gives her subplot a whiff of "Smokey and the Bandit."

In fact, director Scott Waugh tips his hat several times to car movies of the '70s, and viewers who are inclined can pass the time between vroom-vrooms connecting the dots with moments from "American Graffiti," "Bullet," "Two Lane Blacktop," "Duel" and other iconic flicks about the rubber hitting the road.

The actors say empty-headed things like "I'm never gonna stop," "You are out of your mind — and I love it!" and "We'll settle this behind the wheel."

But blah, blah, blah. People who go to see this movie are going to go for the cars, the rush, the roar, and the fact that this is real metal, real roads and real stunts, with a minimum of added special effects.

Anyone who doesn't have quite the same compelling "need for speed" can just putter along in a slower, safer, saner lane—and pray that they don't get flattened by some revved-up grease monkeys like the ones in this movie.

Relax with the paper

Hi-Desert Publishing Co.



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Tech Expo offers insight into future

Story and photos by **Lance Cpl. Charles Santamaria**

The Armed Forces Communication Electronics Association, Twentynine Palms chapter, hosted the Technology Expo at the Officer's Club aboard the Combat Center, Tuesday.

The event featured several companies that offer everything from equipment for training to classes that Marines can take to educate themselves on future technology, programs, forms of communication and training simulators.

"These events are not only for Marines but also for our civilian counterparts who work with us," said Capt. Marc Shelton, chapter president, AFCEA Twentynine Palms Chapter. "The ultimate goal for giving Marines expos like this one is that by doing so, we make a smarter corps. We facilitate the communication of information so a dialogue can be started and Marines can attend classes or even find something that can help their command with training down the road."

The Twentynine Palms Chapter of the AFCEA was erected last year and strives to make their network bigger. Combat Center Marines and Department of Defense employees can benefit from the information that can be attained through the different companies.

"What we offer and bring each time is member driven," Shelton said. "If you want to know more about a certain piece of equipment or register for a new class, we can provide that information at the next event."

Equipment like graphic simulators, simulated Improvised Explosive Devices, and durable power supply units for electronics were on full display for participants to observe. This added to each company station by showing people what they were reading and listening about. Vendors see the expo as a way to see who they want to reach, and have direct communication with them.

"Events like this put me in face-to-face contact with people who have a need for the equipment that I offer," said Dean Preston, president, Explotrain. "It puts me in a position to begin a conversation with the people who need the training equipment I offer and I want to offer something that can be relied upon, but more importantly, better equip service members for what they may encounter on the battlefield."

People of all jobs and ranks continuously learn. The need to improve and know what technology is coming next is important in order to stay effective.

"I'm looking forward to seeing this chapter grow and have more companies participate with the Marines and contractors on base to offer equipment and education," Shelton said. "It doesn't matter if you're a grunt or a communicator the education information offered at these events are beneficial for everyone. The bigger we become, the more of it we want to offer."

What we offer and bring each time is member driven.

— Capt. Marc Shelton

[Top, left] Combat Center Marines speak with Eric Wilson, government military sales manager, and Mark Jansse, federal account manager, Lind Electronics Incorporated, about the different products they offer during the Technology Expo at the Officers' Club, Tuesday.

[Top, right] Dean Preston, president, Explotrain, shows Marines the benefits of training with the equipment on display during the Tech Expo at the Officers' Club, Tuesday.

[Center, right] Dean Preston, president, Explotrain, displays a Model X-OHW Indoor Non-Pyrotechnic Improvised Explosive Device Simulator during the Techn Expo at the Officers' Club, Tuesday.

[Bottom, right] Will Land, director of Department of Defense sales, Lenovo, presents models of laptops to Marines during the Tech Expo hosted at the Officers' Club, Tuesday. Land explained the customization options available to those interested.

