

ARMED FORCES DISPATCH

San Diego Navy/Marine Corps Dispatch www.armedforcesdispatch.com 619.280.2985
 Serving active duty and retired military personnel, veterans and civil service employees



SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 44
 APRIL 8, 2024

April is Month of the MILITARY CHILD

STORIES FROM MILITARY KIDS



What inspired me to draw this picture was my dad. He was in the Marine Corps. When I grow up I want to be just like my dad and join the Marines. I think everyone should know that being a military kid is hard because we are always moving and missing our family like grandma, grandpa, aunts, uncles and cousins. I still love being a military kid.

**Kyron|Grade 2
 U.S. Marines**

SOURCE:
MCEC
 MILITARY CHILD
 EDUCATION COALITION
<https://www.militarychild.org/get-involved/their-story>

I think I'm pretty lucky to be a military kid, sometimes it's hard because we move around a lot but it gives me a chance to try new things and meet new people. This school year I got to live with my aunt and cousin [with both parents deployed] and we got to experience a hurricane together, it was so crazy. When I was living in North Carolina I was able to join the Military Kids group at my school and met other kids like me so that was cool...

And I was super lucky, during our deployment I was able to FaceTime with my parents and get phone calls!

**Mikayla|Grade 2
 U.S. Air Force**



All commissaries plan to offer home delivery of groceries starting in late summer

by Rachel Nostrant, *Military.com*

Troops, military families and veterans in the U.S. may be able to have their commissary groceries delivered right to their front door this summer, according to the Defense Commissary Agency.

The home deliveries, set to begin in late summer, are planned as an expansion of the agency's COVID-19 pandemic-era accessibility program and would be provided within a 20-mile radius of commissaries at bases in the continental U.S., Tressa Smith, a DeCA spokesperson, told *Military.com* in an e-mail.

During the pandemic, the agency created the "Click2Go" program so patrons could order food from home and pick it up, limiting contact with others. This new delivery feature will similarly be available through DeCA's website and its "Commissary Click2Go" application.

"The plan is to eventually deliver groceries from all commissaries in the continental U.S. to customers on and off base, in barracks or housing, and offices," Smith said of the program. Because of regulation differences overseas, the program will not be available outside of the continental U.S.

No contract has been awarded yet regarding who will provide the delivery services, Smith told *Military.com*. "The delivery solicitation is in the contract sensitive stages with a goal of having the solicitation on sam.gov by late April," she added, referring to a federal website for contractors.

The home delivery system has already been tested at eight locations, including commissaries at Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia, Fort Liberty South in North Carolina, and MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2024/03/28/Times>



The terms Gold Star family, Gold Star Spouses, and Gold Star Wives traditionally refer to the surviving loved ones of military members who lost their lives in the line of duty. Gold Star Spouses Day was created to honor these loved ones.

Gold Star Spouses day will be observed on Friday, April 5, 2024.

As with many things in American culture, it can take time for our institutions to catch up with society, which is why over time the word "wives" in the name of the remembrance has been replaced by the word "spouses" many use the terms Gold Star Wives Day and Gold Star Spouses Day interchangeably.

Refer to <https://www.goldstarwives.org/>

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NAVY'S TOP OFFICER CREDITS TRAINING, LOGISTICS WITH MEETING RED SEA MISSION

by Matthew Olay, DOD News
Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti yesterday said she credits both a recent transformation in the Navy's surface warfare training regimen and the quality of logistics operations for the service's ability to successfully counter recent attacks by Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists in the Red Sea.

Navy assets have been operating in the Red Sea since December as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a U.S.-led, multinational coalition established to counter attacks by Houthi terrorists on merchant and naval vessels.

"[Operation Prosperity Guardian] is a great coalition of nations that are really standing up for the rules-based international order as we work to preserve the free flow of commerce through the Red Sea, through the Bab el-Mandeb [Strait], and on into the Gulf of Aden," Franchetti said.

During a discussion on the overall state of the Navy with Defense One, the digital media platform in Washington, Franchetti was asked about what lessons the Navy has learned in the months since it first began

participating in the coalition.

The first lesson, Franchetti said, relates to a transformation in surface warfare training that began roughly nine years ago. At that time, the Navy brought in highly trained instructors to teach members of the surface warfare community how to bring a tactical edge to the field.

"And now you see nine years later, ... we've set up reach-back to our warfighting centers to be able to really understand what's going on in the operating environment, to be able to adjust tactics, techniques [and] procedures," said Franchetti, who lauded the quality of Navy training across all surface-ship platforms and the entire joint force.

"I think the investments that we made are really paying off," she said, "[including] those great lessons that we're learning about how to innovate while we're out there in the same battle space."

Franchetti also highlighted how the evolving quality of the logistics operations being conducted during Operation Prosperity Guardian is contributing to the Navy's overall operational readiness.



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea meet with command leadership during their visit to Naval Base Guam, Nov. 21, 2023. U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Amanda Gray

"We had to bring some of our ships out of the Red Sea, originally, to be able to do some of the [logistical] things they needed to do," explained Franchetti. "But now we've been able to work with allies and partners to be able to do that right on station and really keep everybody in the fight."

Franchetti pointed out that the Navy is successfully conducting multiple logistics operations on a daily basis in regions beyond the Red Sea.

"I'm really proud of how our forces are set up across all of our different regions to be able to respond and to be able to pull together to provide the resources

we need to keep our operations going," she said. "I think it's a real testament to the work that's been done in the past to enable us to do this work now and into the future."

Houthi militants have attacked or threatened Navy and commercial vessels more than 100 times since late November of last year, according to U.S. Central Command. In response to these attacks, U.S. and coalition forces have conducted 50 self-defense strikes as of March 25.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3723681/>



Army

- 2 injured in Apache helicopter crash, second mishap in three days
- Army investigating reports of possible camera found in Schofield restroom
- Fire at Fort Carson burns 106 acres
- Fort Cavazos Soldier charged with child pornography,
- Army creates central office to manage moves of service families with special needs

Navy

- Navy preps hypersonic weapon test this spring, with Army watching
- Japanese sailors begin Tomahawk training ahead of missile delivery
- Navy warship fights off four-drone Houthi attack
- Houthi drones target Navy, coalition ships in Red Sea a second day

Marine Corps

- Coast Guard searches for U.S. Marine who went swimming in Puerto Rico
- Marines back in Australia during six months of training across South Pacific

Air Force

- New Air Force combat wings could deploy in two years

Space Force

- Space Force aims to bring in full-time Reservists this summer, Saltzman says
- Advancing in space, China poses growing threat, USSF leaders warn

Your Military

- Army Corps of Engineers supports Baltimore bridge recovery efforts
- All U.S. commissaries plan to offer home delivery of groceries starting in late summer

Veterans

- Nearly 250,000 veterans to receive payouts in 3M ear-plug settlement
- VA, other fed agencies must show their AI tools are safe, Harris says
- The deadline is approaching for PACT Act claims and lawsuits over Camp Lejeune water contamination

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Pentagon advised to get better handle on chronic lack of sleep in services

by Matthew M. Burke, Stars and Stripes

The military's approach to preventing fatigue is fragmented and requires greater oversight to prevent potentially fatal accidents and help sleep-deprived service members, a government watchdog agency said March 26.

Dedicated leadership at the Pentagon and in each service is needed to oversee progress combatting the issue, the Government Accountability Office said in a report released March 26.

The GAO asked service members how sleep deprivation affected their work and several said that slower reaction times could have led to deaths, injuries and millions of dollars in property damage.

"Sometimes when I'm driving, I find myself falling asleep and I have to catch myself," said one respondent, who added that they feared they might kill someone due to lack of sleep. Rotary wing pilots, drone operators and aviation maintainers also reported fatigue interfering with their decision making.

U.S. service members have long complained of high operational tempos and sleep deprivation. Only about a third reported receiving seven or eight hours of sleep per night, according to periodic defense health surveys conducted between 2005 and 2018, the GAO report said. The majority reported sleeping six or fewer hours.

DoD recommends at least seven hours per night for optimal performance and readiness.

"DOD recognizes that impairment from fatigue can be equivalent to the effects of alcohol intoxication and significantly increases the risk of physical injury," the GAO report said.

Fatigue was identified as a factor in the June 2, 2016, crash of a Blue Angels F/A-18 Hornet that killed Marine Corps Capt. Jeff Kuss at an airfield in Tennessee.

It was likewise identified by the National Transportation Safety Board as a contributing factor in the crash of Navy destroyer USS *John S. McCain* on Aug. 21, 2017, which killed 10 sailors.

In response, Congress in 2022 ordered the GAO to undertake a "comprehensive review" of DOD efforts.

The report found that while there are many research projects across the services, the Pentagon hasn't facilitated collaboration and lacks leadership in key areas.

The GAO recommended that the Pentagon create an office to act as a focal point for its fatigue-related efforts, and that the office should have the authority, staffing, resources and commitment to oversee service-level programs.

DOD also should set up time frames for follow-on actions, coordinate with stakeholders and identify those responsible for implementing the recommendations of past fatigue-related studies, the report said.



Paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade sleep on the floor after working through the evening prior to an early-morning combat equipment jump at Aviano, Italy, on March 17, 2018. U.S. Army photo by John Hall



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U.S. Marines, Sailors arrive in Darwin for 13th iteration of MRF-D

by Capt. Madison Reynolds

Marine Rotational Force - Darwin
DARWIN, Australia - A new group of Marines and Sailors arrived in the Northern Territory to begin the 13th annual iteration of Marine Rotational Force - Darwin.

Led by a California-based Marine infantry regiment for the third year in a row, this year's Marine Air-Ground Task Force brings approximately 2,000 U.S. Marines and Sailors to Australia's Northern Territory for a series of exercises and training events alongside the Australian

Defence Force.

Part of a 25-year agreement made in 2011 by then-President Barack Obama and then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard, the six-month deployments advance shared security objectives identified in the Australian United States Force Posture Initiatives. The deployment has grown in scale and complexity each year, enhancing our Alliance's capabilities and ability to work together, and improving our combined capacity to respond to crises and contingencies in the Indo-Pacific region. MRF-D remains

a key touchpoint of the Australia-U.S. security Alliance.

"The Marines and Sailors of Marine Rotational Force - Darwin are honored and excited to continue the legacy of cooperation and interoperability with our Australian Defence

Force brothers and sisters," said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Brian T. Mulvihill, the commanding officer of MRF-D 24.3. "Our strong Alliance contributes to stability in the region and enables the readiness of our forces to respond to any crisis or con-

tingency that arises."

Participants will conduct operations across a full spectrum of missions including expeditionary operations, geographically distributed communications, non-combatant evacuation operations, embassy reinforcements, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and rapid projection of combat power.

"These rotations not only help build interoperability between the ADF and the U.S., but also serve to increase regional coop-

eration with partner nations in the Indo-Pacific," said Australian Navy Capt. Mitchell Livingstone, the commanding officer of Headquarters Northern Command. As in previous rotations, this year's MRF-D exercise schedule will incorporate security partners from throughout the Pacific Islands and the broader region. Training events will occur throughout Australia and various countries in the region through the end of MRF-D 24.3's rotation in October.

Navy resources arrive in Baltimore to support Key Bridge efforts

by Navy Public Affairs

The Chesapeake, a 1,000-ton lift capacity derrick barge, the Ferrell, a 200-ton lift capacity revolving crane barge, and the Oyster Bay, a 150-ton lift capacity crane barge have arrived in Baltimore Harbor. An additional 400-ton lift capacity barge is on track to arrive early next week. The barges, contracted through Naval Sea Systems Command, will support the Coast Guard-led Unified Command in its effort to clear and reopen the channel.

The barges will be used by the Navy's Supervisor of Salvage and Diving to remove submerged portions of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. SUPSALV will accomplish the work in phases. Following an overall assessment, work will focus on disassembling and removing the bridge section by section. The disassembled pieces will be lifted onto barges, which will then be transported away.

An additional 12 crane and support vessels including tugs, survey, dive and crew boats are in the mobilization process and will arrive to Baltimore in the coming days. SUPSALV will manage the operation and use of all assets to provide centralized oversight of all

salvage operations.

SUPSALV is a world leader in the ocean engineering discipline of marine salvage, towing, pollution control and abatement, diving and diving



The Chesapeake, a 1,000-ton lift capacity derrick barge, the Ferrell, a 200-ton lift capacity revolving crane barge, and the Oyster Bay, a 150-ton lift capacity crane barge are being used by the Navy's Supervisor of Salvage and Diving to remove submerged portions of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Hannah Mohr

system safety, salvage equipment procurement and underwater ship husbandry.



"Congratulations to #TeamV and SpaceX on another beautiful evening launch! On April 1, SpaceX launched a Falcon 9 rocket carrying 22 Starlink satellites to low-Earth orbit from Space Launch Complex 4 East (SLC-4E). This marks the 11th launch from the United States Space Force's West Coast Spaceport at Vandenberg Space Force Base in 2024!" From Vandenberg SFB Facebook

April 1st finally, SpaceX Starlink launches

On Monday, April 1 at 7:30 p.m. PT, Falcon 9 launched 22 Starlink satellites to low-Earth orbit from Space Launch Complex 4 East (SLC-4E) at Vandenberg Space Force Base.

This was the 15th flight for the first stage booster supporting this mission, which previously launched NROL-87, NROL-85, SARah-1, SWOT, Transporter-8, Transporter-9, and now nine Starlink missions.

The rescheduled launch was the 32nd Falcon 9 flight of 2024, and the 21st dedicated to building out the Starlink megaconstellation. To date, SpaceX has lofted 6,100 Starlink satellites, 5,633 of which are currently operational, said astrophysicist and satellite tracker Jonathan McDowell.

Ships Underway

Total Battle Force

293 (USS 233, USNS 60)

Deployed

94 (USS 63, USNS 31)

Underway

54 (43 Deployed, 11 Local)

ART GALLERY



HONORING HEROES Service members escort Vietnam veterans Nancy Fassbender and Michael Overmeyer during a National Vietnam War Veterans Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., March 29, 2024. Courtesy photo



NORTHERN WINTER Marine Corps Cpl. Michael Kindvall participates in a polar plunge during Northern Winter in Giskas, Norway, March 4, 2024. During the exercise, Marines practiced cold weather survival skills, offensive and defensive operations in an Arctic environment and integration with Norwegian armed forces. Courtesy photo

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Assignment Incentive Pay to be authorized for Airmen, Guardians stationed at extremely cold locations

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) - Effective April 1, the Department of the Air Force approved a new incentive pay for Airmen and Guardians assigned to qualifying bases in the U.S. where the temperature is expected to drop below minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Cold Weather Assignment Incentive Pay is a single lump sum payment given to Airmen and Guardians after signing an agreement to serve a prescribed tour length of at least 12 months, depending on qualifying location.

Locations that meet this threshold include Minot and Grand Forks Air Force Bases and Cavalier Space Force Station in North Dakota, Clear Space Force Station, Eielson AFB and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska, as well as Malmstrom AFB, Montana.

“Airmen and Guardians living in extremely cold conditions faced unique out-of-pocket costs,” said Alex Wagner, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. “In addition to the assignment and retention benefits of the pay, it also comes down to making sure we do our best to take care of our service members and their families stationed at these critical installations.”

This payment intends to ease the financial burden of purchasing certain cold weather essentials, such

as extreme cold weather gear, all-season and/or snow tires, tire



An Air Force C-130 Hercules flies over a group of Navy SEALs, Norwegian naval special operations commandos and attack submarine USS Hampton during exercise Arctic Edge at an undisclosed location in Alaska, March 9, 2024. The exercise provides the opportunity to test a range of capabilities and response options and bolster skills in an Arctic environment. U.S. Navy photo by MCC Jeff Atherton

mounts and alignments, engine block heaters and emergency winter car kits, as well as further incentivizing assignments.

Although AIP-CW is effective April 1, the first pay date is anticipated for July 1, 2024, meaning Airmen and Guardians who move to a qualifying location between April 1 and

June 30 will receive payment retroactively.

The amount of AIP-CW Airmen and Guardians are eligible to receive is based on criteria in the five pay levels outlined in the table below and is subject to change.

This change follows the Department of Defense implementation of the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, which included language authorizing special duty pay for members based in cold-weather climate conditions and the FY24 NDAA, which clarifies the temperature parameters that qualify an area as a cold-weather location.

“We want to ensure Airmen, Guardians and their families have the resources needed to safely live and work in an extreme cold-weather environment,” Wagner added.

The official guidance memorandum can be found at https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2024SAF/Cold_Weather_Assignment_Incentive_Pay_Memorandum.pdf.

FLEET AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

FLEET & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER CLASSES: APRIL

If you're interested in attending one of these classes, call the Centralized Scheduling Center at 866-923-6478. Legend: (V) Virtual (IP) In Person (NBSD) Naval Base San Diego (NBPL) Naval Base Point Loma (NBC) Naval Base Coronado (KMB) Kearny Mesa Branch (GVB) Gateway Village Branch (VSM) Village at Serra Mesa Branch (BVH) Bayview Hills Branch

Finding Federal Employment

Wednesday, April 17 | 1-3 p.m. | NBPL (IP)

Capstone

Get assistance completing your TAP Capstone. Friday, April 12 | 8-11:30 a.m. | KMB (IP)

Insights to Starting a Home-Based Business

Get resources for starting your home-based business Wednesday, April 17 | 12-3:30 p.m. | KMB (IP)

Job Search Strategies

Tuesday, April 16 | 9-11 a.m. | BVH (IP)

Monday, April 29 | 1:30-3:30 p.m. | KMB (IP)

Resume Writing

Make an organized, effective and winning resume. Tuesday, April 16 | 9-11 a.m. | VSM (IP)

Wednesday, April 17 | 9-10:30 a.m. | NBSD (IP)

Monday, April 22 | 1-3 p.m. | KMB (IP)

Friday, April 26 | 10-11:30 a.m. | NBPL (IP)

Spouse Employment, Empowerment and Development

Thursday, April 11 | 9-11 a.m. | NBC (IP)

Friday, April 12 | 10-11:30 a.m. | NBPL (IP)

Thursday, April 18 | 1-2:30- p.m. | BVH (IP)

Navy Spouse in Transition

Thursday, April 25 | 10 a.m.-12 p.m. | NBC (IP)

Find more classes at <https://www.navalifesw.com/>.

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Local Military

USS *Curtis Wilbur* rescues two men at sea



Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer **USS Curtis Wilbur (DDG 54)** responded to a distress call from two boaters stranded off the coast of San Diego last month.

by **Ensign Andie Martinez**
SAN DIEGO—Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer *USS Curtis Wilbur (DDG 54)* responded to a distress call from two boaters stranded off the coast of San Diego recently.

to the distressed vessel to assist. Upon arriving at the scene, the *Curtis Wilbur* crew found the vessel sinking with one person in the water and another partially atop the submerged vessel.

Upon receiving a mayday distress call, the ship maneuvered

Curtis Wilbur rapidly deployed its Rigid Inflatable Boat (RHIB) and Search and Rescue

The Combat Center hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Wastewater Treatment Plant

by **Sgt. Makayla Elizalde**, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center
MARINE CORPS AIR-GROUND COMBAT CENTER - The Combat Center hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for a new tertiary filtration system project recently.

This project will be replacing the current wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), known as “Lake Bandini”, with an underground reservoir that will increase the efficiency of the plant as well as the quality of life for those living or stationed at The Combat Center.

“This effective use of the water is huge, and when it is done... it will make us better stewards of our environment and will make us better partners with the community. It will enhance the quality of life for Marines, Sailors and most importantly their families for years to come,” said Maj. Gen. Thomas B. Savage, commanding general of MCAGCC, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Training Command.

The Combat Center’s WWTP secondary sewage treatment process will be replaced with a tertiary filtration system that reduces the facility’s footprint. This upgrade will also include a storage system made up of two 1.5 MGD tanks, a wastewater disinfection system, and a WWTP operations building.

“The primary goal of this project is to build new facilities that produce title 22 disinfected tertiary recycled water, and to demolish the previously used 1.75 MGD wastewater treatment plant process as it is outdated,” said Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Stitt, director of Facilities Engineering and Acquisition Division, Public Works Division, MCAGCC. The project completion date is March 23, 2027.”

(SAR) swimmer to recover the distressed mariners.

Following recovery, the crew provided the mariners with medical examinations and dry clothing before their transfer to San Diego by a Coast Guard Search and Rescue helicopter.

“I could not be more proud of the Sailors on *Curtis Wilbur* for their quick response and display of professionalism,” said Cmdr. Joseph Foster, commanding officer of *USS Curtis Wilbur*. “Each Sailor involved showcased their

training, and expertly saved two men at sea today.”

USS Curtis Wilbur is homeported in San Diego and part of the U.S. 3rd Fleet, which leads naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary for an effective global Navy. U.S. 3rd Fleet works in close coordination with other numbered fleets to provide commanders with capable, ready forces to deploy forward and win in day-to-day competition, crisis, and conflict.



◆ Operation MWR: April 27-June 1 ◆

Throughout the summer, Navy MWR’s Community Recreation and Navy Entertainment programs will celebrate the resiliency of our military service members and their families, foster a sense of community, and provide an opportunity to connect with friends and others for a day of entertainment, rest and relaxation. Events will include live entertainment, recreational activities, food, games, and more!

MCAS Miramar

Date:

Monday, April 29 - Friday, May 3

Time

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Address

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PHOTO GALLERY

CORONADO (March 26, 2024) Members of Oregon State University Reserve Officer Training Corps simulate training on the obstacle course of Naval Special Warfare Basic Training Command during a tour on Naval Amphibious Base Coronado. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Mar'Queo



SAN DIEGO (March 31, 2024) Vice Adm. Daniel Cheever, Commander, Naval Air Forces, prepares to throw the ceremonial first pitch for the San Diego Padres playing against the San Francisco Giants, at Petco Park. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Keenan Daniels

PACIFIC OCEAN (March 20, 2024) USS Harpers Ferry conducts small boat operations while underway conducting routine operations in U.S. 3rd Fleet. U.S. Navy photo by M2 Sang Kim



Celebrate Earth Month with San Diego County

by Shauni Lyles

San Diego County is transforming Earth Day into Earth Month by holding a series of events highlighting sustainable activities that will span through the month of April to raise awareness about environmental issues.

Earth Day, which is celebrated on Monday, April 22, connects people to the public spaces where wildlife and nature thrive. The global theme this year is Planet vs. Plastics.

Come celebrate our planet and learn how the County is working to create a greener world.

Below is a partial list of events to add to your April calendar. Check www.sandiegocounty.gov/earthday for specific times and locations.

Earth Fair at County Operations Center: The Earth Day Fair will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., April 22, at the County Operations Center, located at 5500 Overland Drive, San Diego. There will be numerous County departments with booths set up for you to learn about the ways your County makes a difference protecting and investing in our planet. The event is free and open to the public.

Tree Planting and Park Beautification Opportunities: Join us for a morning full

of park beautification projects, including tree plantings, invasive plant removal and general trash pickup. Your efforts will improve the environment in and around our waterways – part of the larger Creek to Bay Cleanup coordinated by I Love a Clean San Diego

Projects will take place from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. on Saturday, April 20. Advance registration is required. Materials are provided; come ready in clothes you don't mind getting dirty and wear

sturdy shoes and sun protection. Don't forget your own water bottle and gloves!

To learn more about these and other volunteer opportunities, visit our volunteer web page or send an email to ParksVolunteer@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Self-led Activities: Self-led activities include, Earth Day arts and crafts and park ranger-led hikes. More information at www.sdparks.org.



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DOCTOR REUNITES WITH MEDICAL STUDENT HE DELIVERED DECADES AGO

by Curtis Hill

Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton

A military medical student at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton was reunited with the doctor who delivered her into the world more than two decades ago.

Ensign Hannah Ortiz is currently in the middle of her family medicine rotation as part of her medical education through the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU).

Capt. William Roberts (Ret-Navy) was an active-duty family medicine physician at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton in 2000 when he delivered young Hannah Ortiz, the daughter of a Marine stationed on the Marine Corps base.

"I began delivering babies in 1982 and have delivered or supervised the delivery of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of babies over my career," said Roberts. "I've had patients who told me that I had delivered them, but this is the first time I've heard that from one of our medical students."

Ortiz knew who had delivered her because her mother would speak often about the wonderful doctor she had for the birth of her daughter, and this wasn't the first



Capt. William Roberts (Ret-Navy) a family medicine physician at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, poses with Ensign Hannah Ortiz, a Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences medical student on a family medicine rotation at NHCP. More than two decades ago, Roberts delivered Ortiz at the Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital and the two recently reconnected during the five-week rotation. Photo courtesy of William Roberts.

interaction between the two.

"My mom raves about him to this day," Ortiz added. "We saw him in either 2012 or 2013 at the old hospital when my dad was stationed here on Camp Pendle-

ton again," Ortiz said. "My mom introduced me to him when she saw him during a medical visit to the hospital."

Hannah will only be here for her five-week rotation; how-

Boxer surface warfare officer selected for warfare tactics instructor school

by Petty Officer 2nd Class James Finney
USS Boxer (LHD 4)

What comes to mind when you hear the title red chip? Some may think of a red potato chip or maybe even a poker chip on a card table. Aboard USS *Boxer* (LHD 4), a red chip is the distinguished honor given to one junior officer who will embark on a journey to become an expert in amphibious warfare.

Throughout the talented wardroom aboard *Boxer*, only one can be selected to receive the coveted red chip annually. Following the ship's intensive sea certification period, *Boxer's* Commanding Officer Capt. Brian Holmes presented his first Golden Gator red chip to Lt. Vinnie Delmundo, the assistant damage control assistant.

"From engineering to combat systems to ship handling and beyond, *Boxer's* surface warfare officers play a critical role maintaining and operating this ship," said Holmes. "Among a talented and hardworking group of junior officers on board *Boxer*, Lt. Delmundo has distinguished himself as a warfare practitioner that has a keen ability to lead Sailors. His unmatched dedication to master all aspects of amphibious assault operations made him the optimal selection as a future warfare tactics instructor."

The Red Chip program allows a ship's commanding officer to nominate one surface warfare

officer per year, qualified as a divisional officer, to be selected for the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center WTI program of their choice.

"SMWDC's mission is to increase the lethality and tactical proficiency of the Surface Force across all domains. To complete that mission, we rely on identifying top-performing SWOs to serve as Warfare Tactics Instructors. The Red Chip program allows Commanding Officers to recognize top performers and provide a direct input into a WTI Course of Instruction," said Rear Adm. Wilson Marks, SMWDC commander.

"Once in the COI, candidates are expected to grow and develop as warriors, thinkers and teachers, while remaining humble, credible and approachable. We are excited for Lt. Delmundo to have an opportunity to earn a patch."

The red chip gains Delmundo entry into an exclusive and rigorous four month course of instruction to become one of the infamous naval instructors known as a WTI. There they will train, qualify and develop officers into a warrior, thinker and teachers within four warfare areas. Delmundo's focus will be amphibious warfare tactics.

"It means so much that the command is entrusting me with this opportunity to get this requisite knowledge in amphibious

warfare," said Delmundo.

Having the ability to delve deeper into his passions and honor his family through naval service has been a driving force for Delmundo. On his second tour aboard an amphibious ship, Delmundo's decision to pursue a specialty in amphibious warfare operations has been homegrown.

"My wife's great-grandfather was involved in the D-Day attacks," said Delmundo. "That's going back to one of the most well-known amphibious assaults in history. Marrying into a family with that background and continuing my quest to learn more about amphibious warfare in a modern era is what drives me."

The amphibious legacy has been an immense motivating factor throughout Delumondo's career. When he detaches from *Boxer* and reports for WTI training, he will continue the family business forged on the beaches of Normandy eight decades ago.

While the amphibious warfare technology has changed over the years, the tactics remain time-tested. Delmundo looks forward to being able to train the next generation of surface warriors.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/467392/boxer-surface-warfare-officer-selected-warfare-tactics-instructor-school>

ever, the opportunity to reunite with the wonderful doctor who brought her into the world was too good to pass up.

"When I got here, I asked if Dr. Roberts happened to still work here," she said. "I thought maybe he had retired. He had, but he still works here as a civilian doctor!"

Although she often heard of the doctor who delivered her, a career in medicine was not an obvious choice.

"The first thing for me was

military service. My family has a long history of military service and that's why I wanted to attend the Naval Academy," Ortiz explained. "During my plebe year, I was undecided on what path I wanted to pursue, but I had an academic advisor who gave me great advice and inspiration that led to my interest in the Medical Corps. I applied to USU and here I am on my way to becoming a doctor."

The uniqueness of the situation was not lost on Roberts who now has accumulated nearly 50 years of service in Navy Medi-

cine between his uniformed and civilian service.

"It very nice the way things come around. I'm so impressed with Hannah because she went to the Naval Academy, was accepted to USU, and is pursuing a career in Navy Medicine," he said. "I'm grateful and honored to have been able to play a part in the beginning of her life and now as she continues the military legacy of her family."

Roberts added one final thought, "Oh, and it makes me really feel old!"

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Happy 60th anniversary SeaWorld San Diego

Also during the opening weekend of the anniversary celebration, Precious Moments sculptor Hiko Maeda was in the park demonstrating his sculpting skills and signing guests' purchases of his limited-edition figurine titled "Sea a World of Wonder."

The SeaWorld app contains all sorts of helpful information about the park, activities, dining opportunities and even an interactive map that shows you where you are at any given moment and how to get to where you are going. Check out the sweeping views of the park and Mission Bay from atop the Sky Tower.

At the Shark Encounter, pass through the clear viewing tunnel and observe sharks swimming above and around you.

SeaWorld's animal rescue and care team is on call and available 24 hours a day, year-round, protecting and rehabilitating animals and their habitats. Their exceptional animal care is "Humane Certified by American Humane and accredited by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. SeaWorld is one of the largest marine animal rescue organizations in the world, helping more than 40,000 animals to date. The SeaWorld Conservation Fund, a non-profit foundation established in 2003, has provided more than \$20 million to nearly 1,400 organizations to advance critical research on every continent. A portion of park proceeds goes toward supporting these longstanding conservation commitments."

You'll want to visit again and again, so consider the many special benefits to being a SeaWorld San Diego annual passholder. The park undergoes several transformations, depending upon the time of year. Observing the animals'

behaviors is a fascinating experience full of surprises that never grow old. Entertainers celebrate key holidays with special performances. At special events, experts from SeaWorld educate guests about the fascinating and diverse creatures that they care for.

Halloween, complete with trick-or-treating for candy, is one of my favorite holiday celebrations at SeaWorld San Diego. During the Christmas holiday season, visit with Santa, enjoy special entertainment and check out the live reindeer. In the summer, enter the stadium and enjoy an action-packed stage and water spectacular on Mission Bay. There are indoor, themed stage shows, complete with SeaWorld characters, geared to kids.

Coming soon to SeaWorld San Diego is a brand-new exhibit called "Jewels of the Sea: The Jellyfish Experience." This immersive and interactive aquarium will be the first of its kind for SeaWorld parks.

"Each of the three galleries will feature a jelly species to discover including Moon Jellyfish, Pacific Sea Nettles, Upside-Down Jellyfish, and Comb Jellies. Through educational components and aquarist staff within the exhibit, guests will learn from experts what makes a jellyfish, the beauty and diversity of the translucent species, their behaviors and patterns, and how they have adapted to some of the most extreme environments on Earth."

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse. Copyright © 2024 by Jan Wagner - AutoMatters & More #833

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

I tooted the horn before pulling out onto our street. My husband waved, with the dog standing nearby. I wouldn't see them again until Sunday afternoon.

When our military family was active duty, I was content taking a couple of trips a year. But now, as a "retired" military spouse that doesn't move anymore, I depend on weekend getaways to break up the monotony of normal civilian life.

I had planned this trip with my high school girlfriends months ago, and my excitement was building. In four hours, I'd arrive in the Catskills, and meet up with Patrice, my best friend since ninth grade, and three other girlfriends whom I hadn't seen much since we graduated from high school in 1984 — Andrea, Peggy and Ann.

As my GPS rattled on, I thought of the tote bag in the trunk containing a motherlode of high school memorabilia: my old yearbooks, photographs, journals, and dog-eared notes passed in study hall. My hoarding tendencies had paid off after all.

While making my way to Upstate New York, I envisioned our rental house. The Airbnb photos depicted a spacious, Swiss-style chalet, seemingly plucked straight out of the Alps, in a gorgeous sylvan setting, with a charming warming hut and

Standing the test of time

an outdoor hot tub.

"We're going to have a blast," I thought, imagining us as unrealistically stylish, thirty-something actresses, flipping locks of shiny hair, flashing brilliant white teeth, wearing slouchy cotton sweaters and well-worn Levis, drinking fine wines around an open fire, before a spectacular mountain backdrop.

It was a bad habit of mine — imagining things to be far better than reality — that set me up for disappointment.

That cold, drizzly afternoon, I drove my car through dreary, mud-splattered towns, past abandoned motor lodges and rinky-dink diners. Over a bridge and up a hill, I turned onto an unpaved dead end road, and finally, onto our rental property as directed by my GPS. "You have arrived."

"Wait, what?" I said, peering bug-eyed out of the smeary windshield of my car. "This is it?" The small, wood-sided house looked nothing like the photographs online.

"It'll be fine," my best friend said, laughing. Patrice had driven up from Pittsburgh with Peggy. Soon, Andrea arrived, followed by Ann, who surprised us by wearing her old cheerleading sweater.

I was prepared to impose a strict activity schedule to combat awkward silences. However, the chatter never stopped. Conversation and laughter flowed for hours on end as if we'd never left high school. Food and drink appeared in a haphazard, chaotic dribble throughout the night, until the table was piled high with burnt pizza burgers, wine glasses,

pierogis, peanut butter confection bars, buffalo chicken dip, cheese and crackers, chips, yearbooks and photographs.

"Oh my God, listen to this!" each of us yelled before reading lines from an old note or yearbook autograph. Our adolescent scribbles expressed the immature sentiments of our teen years: "The dance is in two days and no one has asked me yet!" "I hate Chemistry!" "Did you tell him I like him?" "Gag me with a fork!" "I'll never get a boyfriend!" "She's so FAKE!"

Although we'd made plans to explore the Catskills on Saturday, we barely made it out of our pajamas. Pots of coffee led to bloody marys and mimosas. This time, the table was heaped with bagels, sweet rolls, quiche, fruit, and again, our yearbooks. That afternoon, while snow fell over the Catskills, we sat around a roaring fire in the warming hut, singing along to The B-52s, The Go-gos, The Squeeze, U2, Prince, Tears for Fears, Depeche Mode, The Police, and more.

That night, although we were all reluctant to stuff our imperfect 57-year-old bodies into bathing suits, we got in the hot tub. Like a water-filled time machine, the hot tub transported us back in time. Bobbing in the bubbles, we were fifteen again, cracking juvenile jokes and busting each others' chops.

On my Sunday drive home, I noticed that overnight, the trees had been encased in thick layers of ice, glittering like silver sequins in the bright sunlight. It occurred to me that the weekend hadn't disappointed me after all. In fact, reality was even better than I'd imagined.

Veterans News

Medal of Honor Spotlight: Army Sgt. Peter C. Lemon

By Katie Lange

Army Sgt. Peter Charles Lemon was injured several times during a lopsided attack in Vietnam, but he took out several enemy soldiers and refused to quit fighting until he lost consciousness. His courage to defend his base and his fellow soldiers earned him the Medal of Honor.

Lemon was born on June 5, 1950, in Toronto, to Charles and Geraldine Lemon. He has a sister, Judy, and a brother, Richard.

The family immigrated to the U.S. when Lemon was 2 and set up their new lives in Tawas City, Mich. About a decade later, he became a naturalized citizen.

Lemon graduated from Tawas Area High School in 1968 and started working in a factory in nearby Saginaw, according to a 1971 article in the *Escanaba Daily Press* of Escanaba, Mich. By then, however, the Vietnam War was raging, so Lemon enlisted in the Army in February 1969.

After basic training, Lemon received advanced infantry training. He was sent to Vietnam in late July 1969, where he went to Recondo School, which teaches select troops about long-range



reconnaissance techniques and small-unit tactics. The training earned him the coveted title of Army Ranger.

By the spring of 1970, then-Spc. 4 Lemon was serving as an assistant machine gunner at Fire Support Base Illingworth, which was 5 miles from the Cambodian border and overlooked a heavily used North Vietnamese Army route. Several units were stationed there at the time, including Lemon's - Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division.

The enemy obviously didn't want them there, so on April 1, the NVA launched a massive barrage of fire toward the base before sending in about 400 sol-

diers, who chose the perimeter defended by Lemon's platoon as their point of attack.

The fight that ensued was too close for U.S. forces to use artillery. Soldiers also reported that dust from the large NVA contingent's movement was so thick that it jammed their machine guns and rifles.

Lemon, 19, was one of those whose weapons were affected. When his machine gun and rifle eventually malfunctioned, he used hand grenades to fend off the intensifying attack.

After taking out a few enemy soldiers in his vicinity, Lemon chased down another and killed him in hand-to-hand combat. Lemon suffered fragment wounds from an exploding grenade but made it back to his defensive position so he could carry a more seriously wounded soldier to an aid station. Shortly afterward, Lemon was wounded a second time by enemy fire.

Ignoring his injuries, the young specialist moved back to his position through a hail of gunfire and grenades. Quickly, he realized that their defensive sector was dangerously close to being overrun by the en-

emy. Without hesitation, Lemon pressed his counterattack, throwing hand grenades and engaging in hand-to-hand combat with enemy soldiers. He was injured a third time during the melee but still managed to successfully drive the enemy back.

Then, after finding a machine gun that worked, Lemon stood on top of an embankment and, despite being in full view of the enemy, fired until he collapsed from his wounds and exhaustion. Lemon was taken to an aid station where he regained consciousness, but even then, he refused to leave the area until his more seriously injured comrades were evacuated.

When the nearly three-hour battle was over, 24 U.S. soldiers were dead and more than 50 were wounded. Lemon was hospitalized for more than a month after the attack. He was also promoted to sergeant.

Lemon came home from Vietnam later that year. On June 15, 1971, he received the Medal of Honor from President Nixon during a ceremony at the White House. The young soldier dedicated it to three of his closest friends who died in the battle — Sgt. Casey Waller, Cpl. Nathan

Mann and Sgt. Brent Street.

Lemon left the Army the following year and returned to academics. He got a bachelor's degree from Colorado State University in 1979, then received his master's degree in business administration from the University of Northern Colorado two years later.

He and his wife, Diane, whom he married a few months before he received the Medal of Honor, have three children.

Lemon went on to have a successful career with various corporations and as a professional speaker. He also volunteered much of his time to schools, vets' groups and other organizations.

In 1978, Lemon received the Certificate of Outstanding Achievement from President Jimmy Carter for his community efforts. In May 2009, he was presented with the Outstanding American by Choice award by President Barack Obama.

Lemon, who settled in Colorado Springs, continues to receive accolades for his work and valor. He was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 1994. In 2020, a portion of a highway in Michigan going through his hometown was named in his honor. Reports show Lemon also donated his Medal of Honor to his former high school in 2005 to serve as an inspiration to students.

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 619-545-8479 Bldg. 650
Thursday - April 11
 5:30 PM Kung Fu Panda 4 pg

Naval Base Theater - NBSD ★
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 3465 Senn Rd.

Wednesday - April 10

6:00 PM Dune: Part Two pg13

Thursday - April 11

6:00 PM Kung Fu Panda 4 pg

8:10 PM Imaginary pg13

Friday - April 12

5:50 PM The American Society of Magical Negroes pg13

8:00 PM Arthur the King pg13

Saturday - April 13

12:50 PM Kung Fu Panda 4 pg

3pm Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire pg13

6:00 PM Arthur the King pg13

Sunday - April 14

1:00 PM Kung Fu Panda 4 pg

3:10 PM Dune: Part Two pg13

Wednesday - April 17

6:00 PM Arthur the King pg13

Thursday - April 18

6pm American Society of Magical Negroes pg13

8:20 PM Imaginary pg13

For updates check <https://sandiego.navylifsw.com/movies/>

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Friday, April 12

6:00 PM - Arthur the King (PG-13)

Saturday, April 13

3:00 PM - The American Society of Magical Negroes (PG-13)

6:30 PM - Dune: Part Two (PG-13)

Sunday, April 14

12pm - Wonka (G) - Free Showing

3pm - Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

When should we claim Social Security?

Dear Rusty: I am almost 63 and my husband will be 61 soon, and we are looking to see when our best time would be to start our Social Security benefits. We would like to know if one of us qualifies for benefits from a previous marriage from 1984 to 1995. And we are wondering if I can start drawing at age 65, in two years, or if it is better that I wait until 67 because my spouse is 2 years younger than me. Also, if I were to continue working limited hours after 65, what would my earning limit be? Signed: Almost Ready

Dear Almost Ready: The first thing to understand is that full retirement age (FRA) for both of you is 67. If either of you claim before that, your monthly benefit amount will be permanently reduced and, because you are working, you will be subject to Social Security's "earnings test."

If you claim your benefit at age 65 your monthly payment will be about 87% of what you would get if you claimed at age 67. If your husband claims at age 62, his benefit will be about 70% of his FRA amount. The only way to get 100% of the benefit you've each earned from a lifetime of working is to claim at your FRA. You can choose to claim at age 65 as long as you're comfortable with the benefit reduction which will occur, and as long as your annual work earnings do not significantly exceed the earnings limit for that year. In any case, when each of you claims will not affect the other's retirement benefit amount.

Social Security's "earnings test" for those claiming before FRA sets a limit for how much can be earned before some (or all) benefits are taken away. The earnings limit for 2024 is \$22,320, but it changes yearly. If you claim early benefits and your work earnings exceed that year's limit, Social Security will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit. They take away by withholding future benefits long enough to recover what you owe for exceeding the limit. If you significantly exceed the annual earnings limit, you may be temporarily ineligible to receive SS benefits until you either earn less or reach your FRA (the earnings test no longer applies after you reach your FRA). I cannot predict what the earnings limit will be two years from now, but it will be more than the 2024 limit and published at that time. FYI, in the year you turn 67 your pre-FRA earnings limit will be much higher, and when you reach your FRA the earnings test no longer applies.

Regarding your previous marriage, you cannot receive spousal benefits from an ex-spouse while you are currently married. But when to claim may also be influenced by whether either you or your current spouse will get a spousal benefit from the other. If the FRA (age 67) benefit amount for one of you is more than twice the other's FRA entitlement, the one with the lower FRA amount will get a "spousal boost" to their own amount when both of you are collecting.

Spouse benefits reach maximum at one's FRA, but each person's personal SS retirement amount will continue to grow if not claimed at FRA. Waiting past FRA to claim allows the SS retirement benefit to grow by 8% per year, up to age 70. So, with an FRA of 67, claiming at age 70 will yield a payment 24% higher than the FRA amount, 76% more than the age 62 amount, and about 37% more than the age 65 amount. But waiting beyond FRA is only smart if financially feasible and life expectancy is at least average (about 84 and 87 respectively for a man and woman your current ages).

And, as a general rule, if one's spousal benefit at FRA (50% of their partner's FRA entitlement) is highest, then that spouse should claim at FRA to get their maximum benefit.

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Second measles case of 2024 confirmed in county

The second case of measles this year in San Diego County has been confirmed in a 47-year-old resident who had recently traveled overseas, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency announced last week. The most recent confirmed measles case in the County was in February 2024 in an unvaccinated infant who had also traveled overseas. These cases are not linked. The adult is currently hospitalized, but may have exposed others at a number of locations in Encinitas and Carlsbad.

County Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch Immunization Unit staff members are working with Scripps Encinitas Hospital and Scripps Coastal Medical Center to identify and follow up with patients and staff.

In addition, County Public Health Services is working with the multiple sites listed below, and potentially others, to identify and follow up with staff who may have been exposed.

See county web site for list of locations. <https://www.countynewscenter.com/second-measles-case-of-2024-confirmed-in-county/>

"Measles is a very contagious disease that can be spread easily by coughing, sneezing, or being in the same room with an infected person," said Ankita Kadakia, M.D., County deputy public health officer. People with symptoms are asked to call their doctor's office in advance, rather than visit an office directly, so that infection control measures may be activated to prevent exposure to others. Measles develops seven to 21 days after exposure. Early symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes. The distinctive red rash usually appears one to four days after early symptoms appear. A person is considered contagious four days before and four days after the rash appears. The rash typically begins on the face and head, then proceeds downward and outward to the hands and feet. It fades in the same order it began, from head to feet.

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Newspaper delivery driver for news racks, stands, countertops, etc, in south San Diego area 2x a month - no door to door. You need a clean driving record, dependable car w/insurance, base access. Great job for military retiree or military spouse for some extra \$\$ 619-280-2985. Please leave name, area of San Diego you live in, call back number 619-280-2985

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The Veterans Museum at Balboa Park. The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center is a museum located in historic Balboa Park of San Diego, California. Founded in 1989, it is dedicated to create, maintain, and operate an institution to honor and perpetuate the memories of all men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

Active duty military, Museum Member, Children under 12: Free
 Veterans/Seniors: \$4 • Adults: \$5 • Student ID: \$2
 2115 Park Blvd, San Diego (Balboa Park) • (619) 239-2300
<http://www.veteranmuseum.org/>
 Hours: Call for current hours (619) 239-2300

MCRD Command Museum & Historical Society. Museum focusing on Marine Corps history from the 19th century to today is also a research library. <https://www.mcrdmuseum.org/>
 Free admission • The Pass and ID Center may issue day passes to visitors who wish to visit the museum and do not possess military ID-call (619) 524-4200 for information on base access.
 1600 Hochmuth Ave, San Diego, 92140 • (619) 524-4426
 Hours: Mon 8am-3pm, Tue-Fri 8-4; Family day 8-5:45; Sat 10:30-5, • Closed Sunday

Marine Corps Mechanized Museum Camp Pendleton. Managed under the auspices of Camp Pendleton's Museum Division Office, the collection of over 50 vehicles ranges from World War I to the first Gulf War. It includes Patton tanks, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles, trucks, jeeps and amphibious vehicles. When coming aboard Camp Pendleton, please ensure that you have a valid photo ID for every vehicle occupant along with current registration and proof of insurance. <https://www.themech.org/>

24194 Vandegrift Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92058. (760) 725-5758
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USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal. FREE-Children 5 & under, Active Duty military including reservists (w/valid ID). Adult \$34 (ages 13+). Youth \$24 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$24*Must show ID at entrance.

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Research finds connection between 'Social Network Index' score and AI-determined biological age

ROCHESTER, Minn. — A new study from Mayo Clinic finds that socially isolated people are more likely to show signs of being biologically older than their age and more likely to die from a variety of causes. The research, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology: Advances, suggests that social connection plays an important role in overall physical health and longevity, and it should be addressed as a necessary part of the social determinants of health.

To investigate the role of social contact in biological aging, the researchers compared the Social Network Index and AI-enabled electrocardiogram (AI-ECG)-predicted age gaps of over 280,000 adults who received outpatient care between June 2019 and March 2022. Eligible participants completed a questionnaire on the social determinants of health and had AI-ECG records independent of the study on file within one year.

An AI-ECG model developed at Mayo Clinic was used to estimate biological age, which was then compared to chronological age. Previous research shows that the AI-ECG age prediction represents the heart's biological age. A positive age gap indicates accelerated biological aging, while a negative value suggests slower biological aging.

Researchers assessed social isolation using the Social Network

Index, which asks six distinct multiple-choice questions related to these areas of social interaction:

- Belonging to any social club or organization.
- Frequency of participating in social activities per year.
- Frequency of talking on the telephone with family and friends per week.
- Frequency of attending church or religious services per year.
- Frequency of getting together with friends or family in person per week.
- Marital status or living with a partner.

Each question response was given a score of 0 or 1, and the total score tallies ranged from 0 to 4, representing varying degrees of social isolation.

Participants with a higher Social Network Index score — indicating a better social network — had a smaller AI-ECG age gap, and that held true across all gender and age groups. Social network status significantly influenced mortality risk. During the two-year follow-up period, approximately 5% of the participants died. Those who had low social index scores less than or equal to 1 had the highest risk of death compared to other groups.

While the participants were 86.3% non-Hispanic white, the study data point to existing health disparities. Non-white participants had higher average age gaps than

their white counterparts, especially those with lower Social Network Index scores.

"This study highlights the critical interplay between social isolation, health and aging," says Amir Lerman, M.D., a cardiologist at Mayo Clinic and senior author of the paper. "Social isolation combined with demographic and

medical conditions appears to be a significant risk factor for accelerated aging. But we also know that people can change their behavior — have more social interaction, exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, stop smoking, get adequate sleep, etc. Making and sustaining these changes may go a long way toward improving overall health."

About Mayo Clinic

Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit organization committed to innova-

tion in clinical practice, education and research, and providing compassion, expertise and answers to everyone who needs healing.



County launches website focused on South Bay gastrointestinal illnesses

by **Fernanda Lopez Halvorson, County of San Diego Communications Office**

San Diego County Public Health Services has created and is regularly updating a webpage focused on the ongoing surveillance and investigation of gastrointestinal illness based on concerns from the South Bay community.

The webpage provides updates, an explanation of illnesses, surveillance data and resources. The County began monitoring the illness reports in August and is now issuing a Surveillance Bulletin on South Bay Gastrointestinal Illness that is updated weekly on Thursdays.

Gastrointestinal is also commonly referred to as GI and is related to illnesses including the stomach and intestine.

The data reviewed to date reveals no significant increases in reportable GI illnesses and no

increases in related emergency department visits in the South Bay Region. Public Health Services also is reviewing data collected by County medical professionals who were embedded for nearly two weeks with a South Bay clinic. Results are expected in the next 30 days.

County health officials have also updated Imperial Beach officials, the California Coastal Commission, San Diego County Air Pollution Control District, California Department of Public Health and Environmental Protection Agency on the ongoing surveillance work.

"As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have advised, when people come into direct contact with sewage contaminated water, it can lead to a number of illnesses, including those that result in emergency room visits and at times hospitalizations," said Dr. Ankita Kadakia,



the County's deputy public health officer. "South County residents deserve access to clean beaches and waterways. While we continue to closely monitor reports of illnesses and await steps to lessen and clean sewage flows, it remains very important for people to avoid going into water that is contaminated."

Timely reports and maps of

local water quality are available online and updated regularly.

The County of San Diego continues to advocate to the federal government for additional funding and a binational solution to the regular release of untreated sewage that flow across the border, into the Tijuana River Valley and ultimately into the waters off South County beaches.

ARMED SERVICES YMCA CAMP PENDLETON

STRENGTHENING OUR MILITARY FAMILY (TM)

WHO WE ARE

The mission of the Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton is to enhance the lives of military members and their families in spirit, mind, and body through programs relevant to unique challenges of military life. For the past 81 years, our goal has been to strengthen military families who work or reside on Camp Pendleton.

OUR IMPACT

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE</p> <p>Helped combat high rates of military spouse unemployment by providing military families with 50k+ hours of childcare in 2023.</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS</p> <p>Ensured 4k+ military children received academic and social-emotional support to overcome the unique challenges of their parent's military service.</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>FOOD, DIAPER, AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE</p> <p>Distributed 90k+ lbs of food to 14.8K military families in 2023, supported 3.4k+ individuals with commissary cards and gifts during the Holidays.</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>SINGLE MARINE SUPPORT</p> <p>Supported 13.2k School of Infantry Marines with recreation and respite on the weekends.</p> </div> </div>

OUR CORE PROGRAMS

<p>FISHER CHILDREN'S CENTER</p> <p>Offers accessible, accredited, quality and affordable childcare for young children to help prepare them for future success.</p>	<p>OPERATION LITTLE LEARNERS</p> <p>An interactive parent and child education program that offers parents and their preschoolers an opportunity to learn and grow.</p>	<p>OPERATION HERO</p> <p>A no-cost after school program designed to help military kids who may be struggling with change get back on track at home and in school.</p>
<p>CAMP HERO</p> <p>Encourages healthy living and provides outdoor activities and social bonding opportunities for military children.</p>	<p>OPERATION KID COMFORT</p> <p>Custom, hand-made quilts to help children cope with the separation of a parent's deployment.</p>	<p>SERVICE EVENTS</p> <p>Support military families through dances, giveaways, and community events.</p>
<p>HOLIDAY SUPPORT</p> <p>Toy giveaways and financial assistance for active duty service members and their families during the holidays.</p>	<p>SOI RECREATION CENTER</p> <p>Open on the weekends, this recreation space provides a place for School of Infantry students to relax and recharge.</p>	<p>FOOD DISTRIBUTION & FINANCIAL SUPPORT</p> <p>Assistance with food, diapers, gas, and other necessities through monthly distributions, a food pantry, and emergency commissary and gas cards.</p>

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