

The Jet Stream

Friday,
Oct. 14, 2011

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Marine Corps Air Station
Beaufort, S.C.

"The noise you hear is the sound of freedom."

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AIR STATION NEWS



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Did you know...

Oct. 14, 1950, MAG-12 began operations out of North Korea

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Prepare to be challenged

H&HS raises bar for board recognition

Lance Cpl. Timothy Norris
Staff Writer

Marines are always looking for an edge to put them a step ahead of their peers when it comes to promotion. One tool for enhancing that competitiveness is Marine of the year or quarter and meritorious boards.

Gunnery Sgt. Maurice Bease, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron gunnery sergeant, spearheaded changes to the board process for H&HS, saying the additions represent the full abilities of the Marines and make the boards more competitive.

Three Marines have blazed through these boards and came out on top with distinction. Sergeant Robert Lark with Aircraft Recovery is the H&HS NCO of the year, while the Marine of the Year is Lance Cpl. Matthew Hamel with the Distribution Management Office. Corporal Clarence Canty with Air Traffic Control has been selected to go to Marine Corps Installations East to represent H&HS on a meritorious board.

"Healthy competition has always driven the Marine Corps," said Bease. He continued by saying that Marines tend to thrive in competitive environments, and that helps to build a unit's cohesiveness through healthy competition.

Events like leading a platoon through a drill card, a physical fitness or combat fitness test, a Marine Corps knowledge test and a uniform



Staff Sgt. Brian Kester

Lance Cpl. Robert Bullock, an Air Traffic Control trainee gives the order, right face, to the Marines in his charge at the ATC facility Oct. 11. The ATC Marines are learning close order drill and sword manual in anticipation of corporals course and participation in future Marine of the quarter boards.

inspection were added to the process to more closely review the applicant's character and leadership abilities in action.

Before, the boards consisted of a review of an applicant's record with a question and answer

session with the Marine. Bease wanted to improve this process, ensuring the most compe-

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Special photo/Staff Sgt. James Richardson

Major Gen. John Toolan, the commanding general of Regional Command Southwest and Maj. Gen. Glenn Walters, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) commanding general, stand among the leadership of the Afghan Army at a dinner for coalition leaders at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Sept. 28. U.S. Marines, British forces and Afghan soldiers have fought and worked together to quell the insurgency.

Coalition builds camaraderie by remembering loss, celebrating triumph together in Afghanistan

Cpl. Justin M. Boling
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Fwd)

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — With tables set and food prepared, officers from three nations gathered together under a single tent on 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)'s compound at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan.

During the dinner, leaders from the Afghan National Army, British forces and the U.S. Marine Corps gathered around a few tables for a hearty meal and to reflect on their service together in Afghanistan.

"The event was very good for our relationship with our allies," said Afghan National Army Brig. Gen. Ghulam Farooq Parwani, the deputy commanding general of the Afghan Army's 215th Corps. "We are very happy to celebrate our coalition and the successes we have shared."

Marines and British forces fight side-

by-side with Afghan troops in southwestern Afghanistan. The coalition forces also offer aerial support, military training and mentorship to the Afghan military, boosting its proficiency in fighting the insurgency here.

Colonel Ben Hancock, the assistant wing commander of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), said Afghan troops have shown their strength in military training and operations. The dinner highlights the importance of building camaraderie, he added.

The Marines and British troops served as hosts, explained Col. Peter Eadie, the commander of Task Force Jaguar, the British aviation element of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in southwestern Afghanistan.

"Our relationship with our Afghan peers is very strong," said Eadie. "It

SEE DINNER, PAGE 6

Dress stress relieved

Ball gown 'Black Friday' a success

Lance Cpl. Rubin J. Tan
Staff Writer

Operation Ball Gown hosted their third annual event Oct. 6, at the Officers' Club, offering spouses a chance to get that perfect dress for the upcoming Marine Corps Birthday Ball celebration.

The event began at 6 p.m., but with excited spouses eager to start, long lines formed earlier. The scene was reminiscent of the chaos and excitement of an early morning on Black Friday.

Sylvia Wood, a Roanoke, Va., native, stood patiently at the end of the line waiting for her chance to receive a dress to call her own.

"I decided to come here for the first time — this year — because it is a great way to save a little money, since prices are always rising in this harsh economy," said Wood, a Weapons and Field Training Battalion spouse.

For some, MCCS not only gave away free gowns, but they also made going to the ball this year more easily attainable.

"This is nice because you do not have to spend \$300 on a dress you only wear once," said Elysia Jacobs, a Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251 spouse.

Tables topped with jewelry, handbags and shoes in various styles, colors and sizes filled the room allowing

SEE DRESS, PAGE 6



Lance Cpl. Rubin J. Tan

A wide variety of dresses in various sizes and styles are available for spouses to choose from during Operation Ball Gown.

Raising money for the ball

Get your tickets now...

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www.beaufortball.com

Fightertown News Briefs

- The Air Station Base Chapel is looking for musicians to participate in a Christmas concert for the holidays. Practices are held at 6 p.m., Tuesdays at the base chapel. For more information, contact the Marine Aircraft Group 31 chaplain's office at 228-7200 or JoBeth Peterman at 644-5353.
- The 2011 Prince William Cycle Tour in Yemassee offers a 62 or 35-mile bike ride through the historic country roads of Prince William Parish starting at 8:30 a.m., Oct. 22. For more information on the ride or to register, call 441-7402.
- The annual Veteran's Day Parade will begin on Rodgers St. and continue through the downtown Beaufort parade route at 9 a.m., Nov. 11. Afterward, a ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. in the Beaufort National Cemetery. Any person, group, school or organization wishing to participate is encouraged to complete a parade entry form no later than Oct. 28. For more information and parade entry forms, contact the Veteran's Affairs office at 228-6880.
- Pink Walks gets the Tri-Command involved and informed about Breast Cancer aboard the Air Station, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island and Naval Hospital Beaufort. Pink Walks is scheduled 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., today, at the Air Station Fitness Trail. For more information, contact Kathy Williams at 228-7616.



MESS HALL MENU

Monday - Friday
 Breakfast: 6 - 7:30 a.m.
 Lunch: 11 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.
 Dinner: 4 - 6 p.m.

Saturday, Sunday and holidays
 Brunch: 8 - 11 a.m.
 Dinner: 4 - 6 p.m.

MIDRATS

Sunday - Thursday
 11:30 p.m. - 1 a.m.

* Take-out window: Monday - Friday 7:30 - 10 a.m.
 Sunday - Thursday 6 - 8:30 p.m.

Saturday

Lunch Beef, barley and onion soup
Dinner Swiss steak and potatoes

Sunday

Lunch Baked citrus herb fish and brown rice
Dinner Meatloaf and okra melange

Monday - Friday Breakfast

Hot farina, hot hominy grits and oven fried bacon

Monday

Lunch Beef short ribs and steamed rice
Dinner Jerk pork loin and Islander's rice

Tuesday

Lunch Fried chicken and mashed potatoes
Dinner Roast beef and buttered potatoes

Wednesday

Lunch Glazed chicken and corn on the cob
Dinner Swedish meatballs and rice pilaf

Thursday

Lunch Chicken and dumplings and rice
Dinner Herb roasted chicken and dirty rice

Friday

Lunch Roasted turkey and green beans
Dinner Cajun chicken and jalapeno corn bread



CHAPEL SERVICES

Roman Catholic
 • 9:30 a.m. - Sunday Mass
 • 11:15 a.m. - Weekly Mass: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Protestant
 • 9:45 a.m. - Protestant Church School (Sunday School)
 • 11 a.m. - Protestant Sunday Worship Service
 • 11:30 a.m. - Wednesday Bible Study
 • 5 p.m. - Protestant Bible Study

Other Faith Groups
 • For Jewish, Mormon and Islamic support, contact the Chaplain's Office at 228-7775

Squadron Happening

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122 invites all Werewolves and spouses to a family readiness meeting tonight at 7 p.m. at Port Royal Pasta in Beaufort. For More information, call 228-6074.



HURRICANE HELP

Regular Shelters

- Bluffton High School, 12 H.E. McCracken Circle, Bluffton (capacity 1,128)
- Battery Creek High School, 1 Blue Dolphin Drive, Beaufort (capacity 1,086)
- Bluffton Elementary School, 160 H.E. McCracken Circle, Bluffton (capacity 439)
- Okatie Elementary School, 1657 Okatie Highway, Okatie (capacity 390)

Note: Beaufort County may use these shelters only in a Category 1. No shelters are opened locally for any storm that is a Category 2 or more. During a Category 2 storm or greater, alternate shelters will be set up in other counties. Law enforcement security will be provided at each shelter.

Special-Needs Shelters

- Beaufort Elementary School, 1800 Prince St, Beaufort (capacity 407)
- H.E. McCracken Middle School, 250 H.E. McCracken Circle, Bluffton (capacity 358)

Note: These shelters provide limited medical assistance from nurses/attendants such as helping patients with taking shots, cleaning a wound, changing a dressing, and basic first aid medical treatment. Patients that are on any type of equipment that requires electricity should not use this shelter, but should seek relocation to a facility that can accommodate them. Patients using the special-needs shelter will be required to have a capable caretaker with them.

Items to Bring

The American Red Cross asks that evacuees seeking shelter bring the following items with them to the shelter:

- Change of clothing (enough for several days)
- Linens (pillows, blankets, sheets and towels)
- Any necessary prescription medications
- Child's favorite toys or comfort items
- Formula, diapers and other supplies for your children
- Food/Water

Wind Damage

The extent of wind damage is based upon the hurricane's strength or wind speed. Flying debris or projectiles such as signs, trees, glass, roof shingles, lawn furniture and toys can cause severe property damage as well as major injuries or even death. The National Hurricane Center uses the Saffir Simpson Scale to classify hurricanes by their wind speeds into five categories.

Category 1

- Winds 74 to 95 mph
- Minimal structural damage
- Mobile homes at risk
- Power lines, signs and tree branches blown down
- Storm surge, four to five feet

Category 2

- Winds 96 to 110 mph
- Moderate structural damage to walls, roofs and windows
- Mobile homes at greater risk
- Large signs and tree branches blown down
- Storm surge, six to eight feet

Category 3

- Winds 111 to 130 mph
- Extensive structural damage to walls, roofs and windows
- Trees blown down
- Storm surge, nine to 12 feet

Category 4

- Winds 131 to 155 mph
- Extreme damage to structures and roofs
- Trees uprooted
- Storm surge, 13 to 18 feet

Category 5

- Winds in excess of 155 mph
- Catastrophic damage
- Structures destroyed
- Storm surge, 18 feet or more



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Things you need to know

Fraud, Waste and Abuse

If you know of or suspect any fraud, waste or abuse aboard MCAS Beaufort, call 228-7777. If you know of or suspect any fraud, waste or abuse within MAG-31, call (252) 466-5038. The automated answering service on these lines are available 24 hours a day.

Sexual Assault

The contact numbers for a Uniformed Victim Advocate are 228-4784 and 228-4110. The after hours number is 592-0646.

Siren sound meanings

Upon notification from the weather office, Giant Voice pre-recorded messages will be broadcast. All destructive weather notifications begin and end with a 12 second wailing siren. Then follow on information is repeated twice between siren wails. The following are abbreviated examples of each warning that will be broadcast through Giant Voice.

- Lightning within 5 nautical miles... announced sounding "all clear".
- Thunder storm Condition 1, winds up to 50 knots and/ or hail up to 3/4 of an inch... Test tone - A steady tone will be broadcast for 10 seconds, followed by an alert stating "This is a test" and then another 10 second tone. For more information please call 228-7904, or for example warning tones, visit: www.whelen.com/outdoor/warningtones.htm.
- Tornado condition 1 a tornado is imminent...
- Tornado condition 2... observed within 60 nautical miles
- An all clear broadcast will be

Fightertown deployed:



VMFA-115 Silver Eagles
are currently deployed as part of the Unit Deployment Program to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.



VMFA(AW)-224 Bengals
are currently deployed in support of Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course I-12 to Naval Air Facility El Centro, Calif.



Photos by Pfc. Sean Dennison

Corporal Michael Garetz, a Marine Attack Squadron 513 ordnance technician and Comstock, Texas, native, inspects flares loaded aboard one of the squadron's AV-8B Harriers on the flightline at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Sept. 29.

Marine Harrier squadron stays diligent throughout deployment to Afghanistan

Pfc. Sean Dennison
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Fwd)

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — The temperatures in Afghanistan are cooling, but the Marines of Marine Attack Squadron 513 are losing no steam as they continue to support NATO International Security Force Operations from Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.

Since May the Marines have been working 24 hours a day in conditions far from comfortable. Temperatures have turned the working environment into an oven. An intense flight schedule has kept the Marines on their toes for as long as they've been in country.

"Each shop has its own specific job to make sure each and every system performs at maximum to send the safest aircraft out with that pilot [on a mission]," explained Cpl. Brandon Jones, a Marine Attack Squadron 513 airframes mechanic and Huntsville, Ala., native.

The "Flying Nightmares" of Marine Attack Squadron 513 are part of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) the aviation combat element in support of NATO operations in southwestern Afghanistan. The Marine Corps uses the vertical take-off and short-landing capabilities of the AV-8B Harrier attack jet to provide close-air support to Marine infantrymen and other coalition forces on the ground.

"If there's anything I can do to protect them, I will," added Staff Sgt. James Seigfried, the Harrier squadron's avionics noncommissioned officer-in-charge and a Rosamond, Calif., native.

Throughout their four months in Afghanistan, the Harrier squadron has racked up hundreds of flight hours and dropped dozens of bombs. Yet, even with the prospect of home only a few months away, the Marines haven't forgotten their mission.

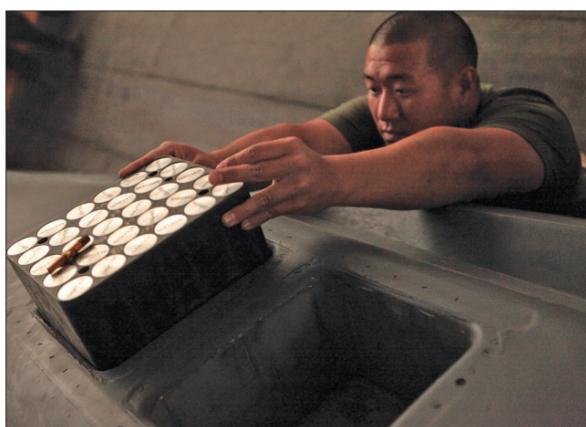
"It feels pretty good knowing Marines' lives are in our hands and knowing everyone is doing the best they can to support them," said Cpl. Michael Prince, a Marine Attack Squadron 513 powerline mechanic and Battle Creek, Mich., native.

Aside from the knowledge that they've allowed fellow Marines to live to fight another day, the Harrier squadron's Marines said they also take away something more personal from this deployment.

"This deployment has given me a sense of self-satisfaction and a ridiculous amount of self-confidence," said Cpl. Michael Garetz, a VMA-513 ordnance technician and Comstock, Texas, native.



Sergeant Justin Jacob, a Marine Attack Squadron 513 powerline mechanic and Houston native, performs a preflight assessment on one of the squadron's AV-8B Harriers on the flightline at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Sept. 29.



Corporal David Chang, a Marine Attack Squadron 513 ordnance technician and Los Angeles native, inserts a box of flares into one of the squadron's AV-8B Harriers on the flightline at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Sept. 29.

CORPS BITS



Aviation ground support changes hands in Afghanistan

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — The gentle thump of helicopter blades wafts over a formation of Marines at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan.

In a ceremony just before dawn, the Marines of Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 assumed the mission of ensuring that sound never stops.

Support squadrons complete a number of missions on the ground to keep the aircraft of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) flying. This includes refueling jets and helicopters, aircraft rescue fire fighting, construction and motor transport support.

Marine Wing Support Squadron 272, based in New River, N.C., carried out those tasks until early October when they relinquished command to Marine Wing Support Squadron 371, deployed from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz.

Lt. Col. Dale Kruse, the Marine Wing Support Squadron 272 commanding officer, led his squadron in support of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) for more than six months.

Support squadrons expand the reach of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) by creating landing zones, expeditionary airfields, and forward arming and refueling points.

These support squadron projects allow British and U.S. Marine Corps aircraft to fly farther and stay in the air longer supporting coalition troops in southwestern Afghanistan.

While deployed to Afghanistan, Marine Wing Support Squadron 272 added taxiways to the runway of Camp Bastion, created a runway for unmanned aerial vehicles at Camp Leatherneck, and built dozens of helicopter landing zones, dotting the Helmand River valley.

Though Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 deployed to Afghanistan two years ago, they will support a much larger force in this deployment.



Cherry Point hosts firefighting rodeo

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. — East Coast Aircraft Rescue Fire fighting Marines demonstrated their skills while competing in the 25th Annual East Coast ARFF Rodeo aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point Oct. 1.

The teams competed in several races, which included: a bunker gear drill, fireman's carry, saw cutting and multiple other gear carries. Each event tested the Marines physically.

The Cherry Point team started its training in August and worked on its skills daily to be more competitive for the competition, said Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Smith, the event organizer for the rodeo and the administration chief for ARFF.

After the competition was over, the reigning champions from MCAS New River stood tall and took home the coveted "Gold Nozzle," as they've done the past two years.

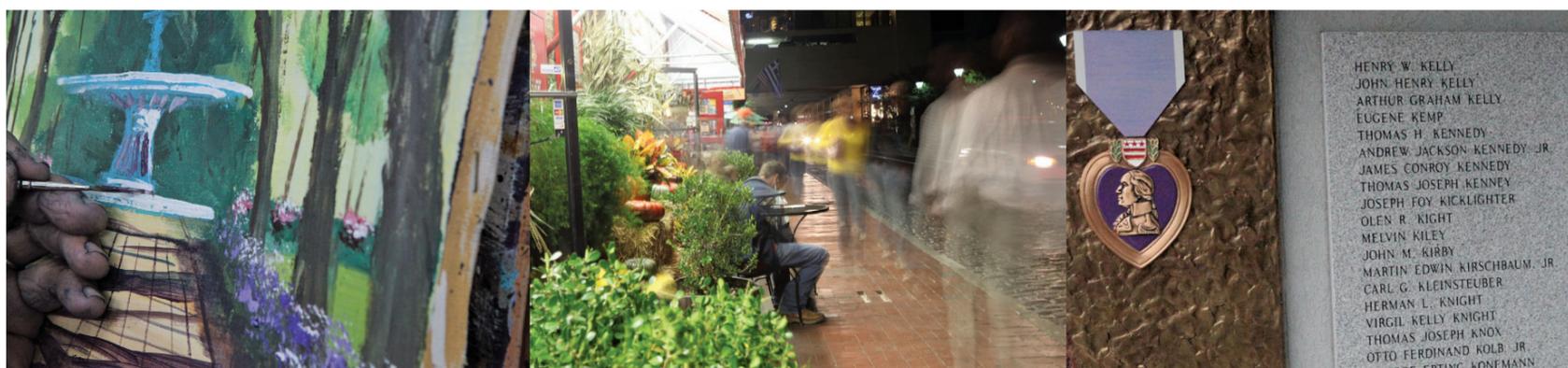
Cherry Point finished the day in third place behind MCAS Beaufort. Marine Corps Air Facility Quantico and Marine Corps Auxiliary Landing Field Bogue rounded out the rest with Bogue finishing last.



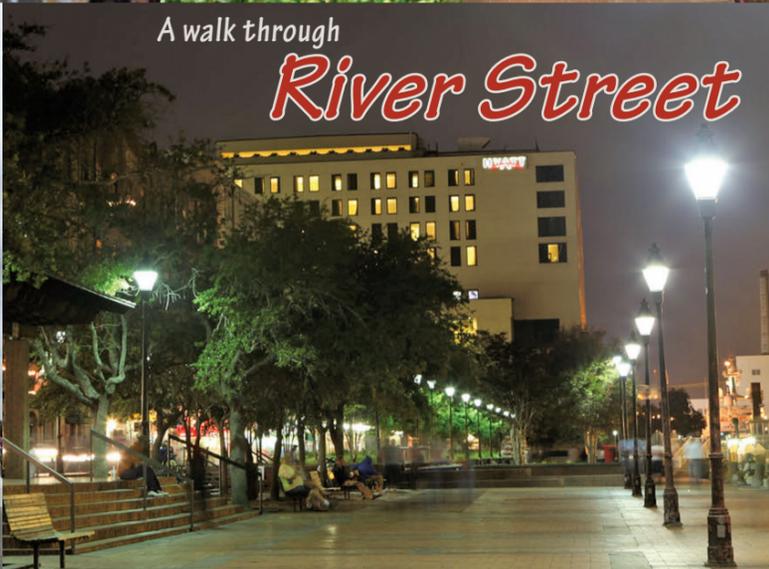
Corps Shot

Lance Cpl. Ryan Carpenter
Three CH-46E Sea Knights with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 268 (Reinforced) carrying Marines with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit's maritime raid force prepare to debark the amphibious transport dock New Orleans Oct. 8 to conduct a live-fire exercise.

Connect with 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) throughout the deployment. Stay up to date with the latest 2nd MAW (Fwd.) news, photos and videos at <http://www.facebook.com/2ndmawfwd>.



A walk through
River Street



On the edge of the Historic District of Savannah, is thriving, nostalgic River Street offering great attractions for families, couples, singles and artists of every kind. Uneven cobblestones pave the street lined with elegant architecture such as buildings, statues, tunnels and fountains belonging to the past.

The historic streets can become crowded as they offer festivals from the nationally renowned St. Patrick's Day celebration to Octoberfest. Other than festivals, events are held along the streets year round for visitors.

Many artists and street performers impress passing tourist on their way to trolley and riverboat tours.

Novelty stores, ice cream shops, candy stores, restaurants and bars are all found along the very lively River Street day or night. Those who are looking for a place to visit filled with bustling life, music and history should begin their journey on River Street in Savannah, Ga.



Marines support next year's ball

Lance Cpl. Rubin J. Tan
Staff Writer

Prices for ball tickets can be quite expensive, but many Marines get what they pay for as they don their most formal uniform and celebrate the Marine Corps Birthday with their spouses and fellow Marines.

Squadrons on the Air Station have been finding ways such as bake sales, haunted houses and car washes to raise money to ease the price for Marines who wish to purchase tickets for the Marine Corps Ball.

The prices for this year's ball tickets are final, but that does not stop service members from fundraising or finding ways to reduce the price for next year's ball.

Combat Logistics Company 23 donated all \$1,000 from winning the 101 Days of Summer prize to Marine Corps Community Services for the 2012 Marine Corps Ball.

In preparation for next year, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 312 has been raising money by holding unit car washes on Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island.

"We have car washes outside the commissary near payday, targeting all Department of Defense employees," said DaNeil Cox, VMFA-312 Family Readiness Officer.

The squadron has offered valet ser-

vices for customers who wish to leave their vehicle while they shop.

"This is a great way to help offset the prices for the Marines and their spouses who are going to attend the Marine Corps Ball," said Cox, a Lansing, Mich., native.

Marines and spouses can also help raise money for the ball by attending a Haunted House, which will be hosted by Marine Wing Support Squadron 273, and opens Oct. 19 through Halloween.

Being creative and showing good initiative has been at the forefront for Marines seeking ways to lower costs, but it must fall within guidelines set by the joint ethics regulations.

"There is a set of guidelines for what is acceptable for service members to participate in when raising money," said Mark Story, Marine Corps Community Service contracting officer.

"It should be encouraged for squadrons to come up with creative ideas to help raise money, whether it is car washes or bake sales," said Story, a Denver.

For fund raising ideas, practitioners should contact their chain of command, or MCCS at 228-7400 to ensure ideas fall within the joint ethics regulations. Marine Corps ball tickets can be purchased at www.beaufortball.com.



BOARDS

continued from page 1

tent Marine is awarded.

Marines who are physically and mentally prepared and display confidence are the ones who stand out during these boards and may eventually receive the award, Bease said.

Canty, an air traffic controller, was selected as the NCO of the quarter for H&HS and then went on to win the H&HS meritorious promotion board. Bease described

Canty as the type of Marine who stood out and definitely earned the recognition.

Canty has excelled since recruit training. He was promoted meritoriously to lance corporal during recruit training, selected for a meritorious mast at Marine Combat Training, and was the honor graduate of his military occupational specialty class.

"I was glad to see the change," said Canty. "This way they get to see well-rounded Marines and what they can do at a mo-

ment's notice."

The positive influence of one Marine can affect many, and possibly the entire Corps, said Bease, citing examples like recent Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. Dakota Meyer.

"What I'm hoping will happen is, section chiefs will take the time to motivate their Marines and train them, in turn making them more competitive," said Bease. "What that will do for our unit is enhance the level of esprit de corps in our young Marines."

DRESS

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attendants to choose from a large selection.

"To get ready for the ball, the cost of hair, makeup, shoes, jewelry and child care can all get quite expensive, with the holidays approaching, everything can get pretty stressful," said Kelly Edens, the Operation Ball Gown coordinator.

It is never too late or early to begin donating ball gowns and accessories, Edens said. Marine Corps Family Team Building at the Air Station and Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island are already accepting items to be donated for next year's Operation Ball Gown.

"We do this because we are a community who helps each other in times of need," said Jacobs, a Dingmans Ferry, Pa., native.

For more information on Operation Ball Gown, contact Kelly Edens at 228-6141, or visit Marine Corps Family Team Building.

DINNER

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was made evident in the short speech given by Brigadier General Farooq during the festivities."

"The event to us felt like a celebration of our established friendship and growth," said Farooq. "Due to everyone's hard work, we constantly see security improvements toward a more stable Afghanistan."

Eadie said he felt inspired to see how much the Afghan troops appreciate the efforts of the coalition to help them keep Afghanistan secure.

In addition to senior British and Afghan military officials, the dinner was attended by Maj. Gen. Glenn Walters, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)'s commanding general, and Maj. Gen. John Toolan, the commanding general of Regional Command (Southwest). Toolan serves as the commander for all NATO International Security As-

sistance Force troops in southwestern Afghanistan.

"Tonight is about the collective sacrifice of our nations and to pay tribute to all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice," said 2nd Lt. Jay Glover, the most junior officer present at the event.

Spread throughout the tables were 60 identification tags looped around flickering candles. Each tag bore the name of a fallen coalition troop who had given his life in Afghanistan.

"The underlying theme for the evening was everyone celebrating working together and the strength of our partnership despite our losses," said Eadie.

The troops spent a lot of time planning and preparing this event to share our traditions with our Afghan allies," said Hancock.

"I feel that the hope is to teach the Afghans the importance of both building troop appreciation and remembering those lost," he said.



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Finally; Boots in the sand

This is a first person guide to the tips and tricks for other Marines from Fighbertown with a deep interest to deploy. If the experience and information shared is helpful feel free to utilize it.

Cpl. Justin M. Boling
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)

Journal entry 5: October 12, 2011 Fun at Kandahar Airfield

Kandahar once served as a tactical headquarters for the Taliban when they held a chokehold on this country and its people. Now, the Kandahar Airfield is a central hub for coalition forces, and a home to the growing Afghan National Air Force.

On the dusty streets of Camp Leatherneck, Marine Corps desert uniforms are the most common sight. This isn't the case at Kandahar Airfield. Uniformed troops from dozens of coalition nations abound.

There's even a boardwalk with restaurants and a weekly bazaar where Afghans open shops to the troops.

But I wasn't there to sight see.

I was on a mission to tell the story of the hardworking KC-130J Hercules Marines. These guys and gals provide aerial resupply, refueling, and troop and cargo transport all over southwestern Afghanistan.

My first day in Kandahar began well. I took some amazing pictures of crewmasters and pilots operating the KC-130J. I saw much of the landscape of this country. I saw its mountains, its small settlements and even its capital, Kabul.

After several hours of flying we landed back in Kandahar. I unloaded my gear and walked toward the hangar as the sky turned a muted purple with the last rays of the sun dipping behind the mountains

in the distance. It was exceptionally pretty.

I walked through the chilled air toward the hangar in awe of this magnificent twilight.

I was stirred back to my senses when a crewmaster I had worked with all day came up to me.

"We have to get to the bunker, now," he said.

In my head I thought, "Someone is trying to kill us."

As soon as we were in the bunker, I noticed that this experience is quite common for the Marines at Kandahar. I looked around and saw Marines waiting calmly. I thought these Marines were pretty brave.

A few seconds later, I heard an explosion not too far from our bunker.

In that bunker, I realized this is a fight we all accept as Marines. When I put on my uniform every morning, I say to the people of America, to our allies and enemies around the world, "I am ready to fight for what I believe in."

Fear is a poison, which no man should drink. Marines face fear, and carry on through it. For a Marine, an enemy attack is an opportunity to close with and destroy those we fight against.

The next morning came and the KC-130J Marines were up early to refuel AV-8B Harriers. The mission carries on.

This is reality. I am in a combat zone. Every Marine I've met knows this, and they carry on each day without fear. They continue the fight.

