



**December 2011**

## **A message from the Commander's spouse to family members:**

Dear Families:

The Marine Corps Ball was fantastic as always! The food was delicious and the company warmhearted. Our Marines looked extra sharp, and the ceremony was one to remember. General Alfred Gray was amazing and told us to always keep thinking. For those of you around the Command, you know we see and hear the word "think" everywhere these days, especially on the Command marquee. It's a word that is used in so many ways in our language: think, outthink, think again, think tank, think aloud, think better of, think nothing of, think twice, think through, think carefully, think outside the box, etc. It is a word with an important message, and General Gray reinforced this during his speech at our Ball.

General Gray, our 29th Commandant, retired after 41 years of service. He had an amazing career in our Corps, and we were so honored he was our Guest Speaker at the Ball. We hope you had a chance to meet and talk with him. My kids really liked his spiffy attire. They thought he was the "coolest" dressed person at the Ball. If you were there, you know he wore a camouflage jacket. Did you also know General Gray appeared on the Birthday Ball episode of Major Dad, a second-season episode that celebrated the 215th birthday of the Marine Corps? He appeared as himself. Now that really is cool!

Thank you, Marine Corps Ball Committee, for a perfect evening and for the wonderful job you did and do each year for our Command to celebrate and honor our Marines. I also want to thank everyone who organized or attended a fundraiser for our Marine Corps Ball. It was a huge team effort that gave us all one very special evening. If you missed this year's Ball, you missed a good one.

Don't fret, though, if you missed it because we still have more fun for you to enjoy this month. Our Holiday Social is at 1 p.m. Dec. 20 at The Clubs at Quantico, and we have some special entertainment and yummy food for all. Rick's Reindeer Ride is back for the kids, too. It was so much fun last year and this year's Holiday Social looks to be even better. Don't forget the grand prize, too. Last year it was a 42-inch television. This year's prize will be just as good. I know it's a really busy month, but if you have some time to join us, I promise you will enjoy yourself. See a ticket representative today.

Enjoy December as it is a month filled with many special events that make us think of twinkling holiday lights, dancing, laughing, singing and just being happy. Soak it all in and enjoy playing in the chill outside then cuddling in the warmth inside. There's no better month to spend precious time with your family and friends. It's a month to show how much we love and care.

It is also a time to give. Make this your month to bring some joy into the lives of others. Little things really do mean a lot. Go out of your way to make one person feel special. I promise it will make you feel special, too.

See you at the Holiday Social. I plan to be there with my whole family, and I hope to see you with yours, too.

THINK of others first,

Traci Kelley

# From the desk of the Family Readiness Officer

By Gerard "Mac" McManus

It is so hard to believe that it is December already. It seems like it was only two days ago that the temperatures were in the 70s. But time marches on and so do the seasons.

Speaking of seasons, I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving and were able to relax and feast on family fun, fellowship and of course, food. Now, are you ready for Christmas and the holiday season? If you take a brief walk around MCSC and its office spaces, you should notice it is "beginning to look a lot like Christmas." Many of the product groups and their office spaces and cubicles are reflecting their festive mood by "decking the halls" with all sorts of decorations, be it wrapping paper lining the walls or beautiful Christmas Trees in key locations in preparation for the office space decoration contest.

All these events are the big lead up to this year's annual Christmas-Holiday Social. In case you might have not heard yet, it will be held at the Clubs at Quantico at 1 p.m. Dec. 20. We will have our customary fine food, Santa and Mrs. Claus, a children's choir from one of our local middle schools, children's activities to include a fun-filled ride on the reindeer train, a special meal of macaroni and cheese and chicken tenders and fabulous door prizes with the grand prize of a flat-screen TV for one lucky attendee. This has all the makings of one of our best ever gatherings, and it will be a shame if you are not there. Plan now to attend.

Lastly, with cold and snowy weather not too far off, now would be a good time to make sure your cars are ready and in tip-top condition to handle whatever comes our way. Check your anti-freeze and windshield fluids, replace wipers, keep kitty litter in your trunk and check or replace tires as needed. During snowy weather driving can be pretty treacherous. Keeping our cars running smoothly can go a long way in ensuring we arrive at all out destinations safely.

May you and your families have a wonderful and merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

## December: A month of observance and celebration

December is a month full of national patriotic or religious observances.

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, which is annually on Dec. 7, commemorates the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during World War II. Many American service men and women lost their lives or were injured Dec. 7, 1941. National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is also referred to as Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day or Pearl Harbor Day. On the direction of the President, the flag of the United States of America should be displayed on the homes of Americans, the White House and all U.S. government buildings. The flag should be flown at half-mast to honor those who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

People celebrate Christmas Day in many ways. In the days or even weeks before Christmas Day, many people decorate their homes and gardens with lights, Christmas trees and much more. It is common to organize a special meal, often consisting of turkey and a lot of other festive foods, for family or friends and exchange gifts with them. Children, in particular, often receive a lot of gifts from their parents and other relatives and the mythical figure Santa Claus. Many Sunday schools, churches and communities organize special events. These can include decorating the neighborhood, putting up a Christmas tree and planning a Nativity display, concert or performance. A lot of plays and songs have an aspect of Christmas as a theme. Some groups arrange meals, shelter or charitable projects for the less fortunate.

Jewish communities in the United States celebrate the first day of Hanukkah on the 25th day of the month of Kislev in the Jewish calendar. The Hanukkah period lasts for eight days and is celebrated from the 25th day of Kislev to the second day of Tevet. The first night of Hanukkah starts with special blessings at sunset the day before the 25th of Kislev. Many Jewish people light the *hanukiah* (or *chanukkiyah*), which is a type of candelabrum. Many Americans of Jewish faith also eat food fried in olive oil, such as potato cakes and different fried breads. Hanukkah dishes include *sufganiot* (Hanukkah donuts), potato *latkes* (pancakes), *mandelbrot* (a hard bread), and *rugelach* (filled pastry). The first day of Hanukkah is the start of a celebratory period in which a four-sided toy called *dreidel* is used for games. The first night of Hanukkah is also a night when people sing traditional songs to celebrate Hanukkah. Gift-giving is also popular at this time of the year.

Kwanzaa is a holiday honoring the culture and traditions of people of African origin. It is celebrated between Dec. 26 and Jan. 1 each year by people from a range of African countries and their descendants. Kwanzaa consists of a week of celebrations, which ends with a feast and the exchange of gifts. During the celebrations, candles are lit and libations are poured. During Kwanzaa, a wooden unity cup is used to pour the libations. A Kwanzaa ceremony often also includes

music and drumming, a reflection on the Pan-African colors of red, green and black and a discussion of some aspect of African history. Women often wear brightly colored traditional clothing. Some cultural organizations hold special exhibitions of African influenced art or performances during the period of the celebrations.

## Command Holiday Social set for Dec. 20

MCSC's Holiday Social will take place from 1-4 p.m. Dec. 20 at the Clubs at Quantico. All MCSC and PEO LS employees are invited to bring their children and enjoy the afternoon's festivities.

Activities for little ones include writing letters to Santa, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, ornament making and rides on a reindeer tractor pull. A choir from Stafford's A.G. Wright Middle School will provide entertainment, and again this year, the master of ceremonies will be Colonel Mike Bergerud, MCSC's Program Manager for Marine Intelligence.

The great food and drink available will be similar to last year's feast, but this year a children's-only buffet with chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese will be added. There's also a cash bar and lots of door prizes, including the grand prize – a flat-screen high-definition TV.

Section ticket representatives are selling tickets, but sales end at noon Dec. 16. Tickets are \$6 each and \$25 for a family of five or more. Marines are free, but they still need to pick up a ticket to attend. Family members for Sergeants and below are also free, as well as children age 12 and under. Tickets are needed for entrance to the party and to be eligible for door prizes. Tickets will not be sold at the door. Ticket representatives are listed below:

PG10	Lavonne Robinson
PG11	Dawn Buerke
PG12	Julia Jones
PG13	Lori Forrest
PG14	Beth Swedish
PG15	Susan Wood
PG16	Becky Dembowski
AC LCL	Kindria Watkins
AC Contracts	Lorraine Strother
AC PROG	Cathy Montgomery
CMO	Nicois Harris
Corp Comm	Bill Johnson-Miles
DC RM	Wilma Tuttle
DC SIAT	Katie Ruskin
GCSS-MC	Ana Villanueva
IP	Antoinette Lloyd
JPO MRAP	Jeanette Hernandez Guillaume
JPO MRAP	Katherine Barker
PEO LS	Candy McMahan
PM Ammo	Michele Lee
WMD	Lorraine Updike

Contact any ticket representative for more information.

## Command contests to lift holiday spirits

There are two contests associated with the Command Holiday Social on Dec. 20 at the Clubs at Quantico. The first is a workspace decorating contest sponsored by the Holiday Social Committee, and the second is a holiday dessert competition sponsored by the Families On Point Command Team.

Command family members and employees are encouraged to prepare their favorite dish – pies, cakes, cookies, fudge, brownies, etc. – and bring them to the Holiday Social. The dishes will be judged on taste and presentation. Four judges will choose a grand prize winner and a runner-up. Both will be awarded certificates, and first place will receive a glass cookie jar.

To enter the dessert competition, send the entrant's name, name of dessert and type of dessert to [mcscpao@usmc.mil](mailto:mcscpao@usmc.mil) by Dec. 16. Dessert dishes must be in place at the Holiday Social by 1:30 p.m. Dec. 20. Attendees who do not want to enter the competition are still encouraged to bring a dessert dish to share with attendees.

The workspace decorating contest includes cubicles, doors, kitchen areas or any small area, and it is open to decorating teams up to five people. There will be one winner chosen per building. Check with your section to see if your building is participating. Each member of the winning team will receive 59 minutes off and certificates. Command leaders have been asked to nominate one or two judges per building.

All decorations must be in place by Dec. 15. Judging will take place the following day, and winners will be announced during the Dec. 20 Holiday Social. Decorations must be in good taste and should not be offensive to anyone, no matter what traditions they may follow. To enter the decorating competition, send the names of each team member and location of decorations to [mcscpao@usmc.mil](mailto:mcscpao@usmc.mil) by Dec. 12.

## Command surveys family members

The Families On Point Command Team is asking all family members of Command employees to participate in a quick 10-question online survey. Employees are also invited to take the survey. This brief survey will help the Families On Point Team best determine the specific areas that interest family members. The survey covers activities, communication tools, volunteering and more. There is a link to the survey on the Command's family website at [www.marcorsyscom.usmc.mil/families](http://www.marcorsyscom.usmc.mil/families), and it is also available at <http://www.marcorsyscom.usmc.mil/survey/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=982HI68>.

## 'Are You Smarter Than a Contracting Intern?'

MCSC's Contracts Team is conducting an event that includes a series of variety game shows, including Acquisition Price is Right, Who Wants to be a Contracting Officer? and Are You Smarter Than a Contracting Intern? Volunteer contestants will be selected randomly from the audience.

The event will be held from 1:30-3 p.m. Feb. 14 at Little Hall. It is free and open to all MCSC and PEO LS employees and their family members. Light refreshments will be served.

The purpose of the interaction is to show Command team members what the Contracts Team does and what they are responsible for. This activity is the second volunteer event requested by the Families On Point Command Team that focuses on a different Command organization each quarter. The first event was the Ground Transportation and Engineers Systems Open House in October.

## [MC&FP December 2011 eMagazine - Preparing for the Holidays](#)

The December 2011 edition of the Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) eMagazine provides resources and information about maintaining healthy and strong relationships throughout the holiday season and beyond. This edition also focuses on the Armed Forces Retirement Home, highlighting a groundbreaking ceremony for a new building at its Washington facility.

## National Military Family Association newsletters

Click on the links to read the latest electronic newsletters for [Military Family Topics](#), [The Voice for Military Families](#), the [Monthly Bulletin](#) and [Spouse Club eNews](#), all published by the National Military Family Association.

## Military Child Education Coalition E-News

Click [here](#) to see the newsletter for friends of the Military Child Education Coalition.

## **First Lady kicks off holiday season with military families**

In a gesture of gratitude for their service and sacrifice, First Lady Michelle Obama invited military families – including families of the military fallen – to be among the first to see the White House decked out for this year’s holiday season.

## **Google for veterans and families available**

The Google Veterans Network is our employee volunteer community that strives to make Google a great place to work for those who have served, their families and their friends. We also aim to be a positive contributor to the veteran community at large. Google products and services have made our lives a little easier – whether we are still in the service, transitioning out, or on a new path in our civilian lives.

## **Officials name new Education Activity director**

Long-time Defense Department civilian Marilee Fitzgerald will become the new Department of Defense Education Activity director.

## **New director aims to boost student achievement**

As acting director of the Department of Defense Education Activity, Marilee Fitzgerald set out on a journey more than a year ago to transport Defense Department schools into the 21st century.

## **New Tricare handbook available online**

Tricare said its newly combined 88-page handbook includes information on regional contractors; providers; the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System; enrollment and disenrollment; access standards; emergency, urgent, specialty, and routine care; referral and prior authorization requirements; health, pharmacy, and dental benefits; filing claims; and other program information.

## **‘Extreme Makeover’ seeks military families for holiday episode**

The cast of ABC’s “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” would like to brighten the holidays for a deserving military family this year.

## **Spouse attends career fair in Hawaii**

Guest blogger Dallas Nagata White, an Army spouse, shares her experiences at a Hiring Our Heroes career fair Nov. 14 on Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. Along with more than 50 employers, First Lady Michelle Obama also attended the fair, which was sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as part of a yearlong effort to help spouses and veterans find employment.

## **First Lady to vets: ‘America does have your back’**

First Lady Michelle Obama continues to keep service members, their families and veterans in the minds of the American public while pushing to secure more jobs for veterans and military spouses.

## **Cooking event stirs support for spouses**

Guest blogger Angee Croxon, a military spouse, shares her experiences at a spouse appreciation event during the Metropolitan Cooking and Entertaining Show in Washington, D.C. Along with a host of celebrity cooks and exhibitors, Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, also stopped by to visit with military families during the Operation Home Cooking event.

## **Sesame launches new resources for military families**

With hundreds of military families gathered, Sesame Workshop unveiled a new collection of resources designed to help children stay connected with military loved ones.

## **Holly Petraeus: Troops, families deserve financial protection**

Home ownership, military education benefits, car loans, spouse employment and indebtedness top the list of financial issues confronting service members and their families, a military finance expert said.

## **Marine's Christmas song salutes families**

During an earlier deployment to Iraq, Marine Corps Master Sgt. Robert Allen wrote and recorded a song for his wife, Carla, and sent it to her on Christmas Eve. "She said she bawled her eyes out when she heard it," Allen said. "My wife can't stand it at all when I leave, but she understands what I do. She understands being a Marine is not just my job, it's my passion."

## **'Budget fatigue' can lead to holiday debt**

It's easy to get frustrated and tired of tight purse strings, particularly after years of economical setbacks, and decide to let loose over the holidays. But today's spending excess is tomorrow's debt hangover.

## **First Lady: 100,000 more jobs committed to vets, spouses**

First Lady Michelle Obama announced a private sector commitment to hire 100,000 veterans and military spouses by 2014, bringing to at least 125,000 the total commitment in response to President Barack Obama's recent hiring challenge.