

District and Heal the Bay partner for pilot environmental program

By Greg Fuderer

LOS ANGELES — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Heal the Bay held an informal ceremony here Friday acknowledging the organization's commitment to provide a cash contribution toward the installation of trash racks in Compton Creek, the start of a pilot program to determine how much debris they can remove from a segment of the Los Angeles River.

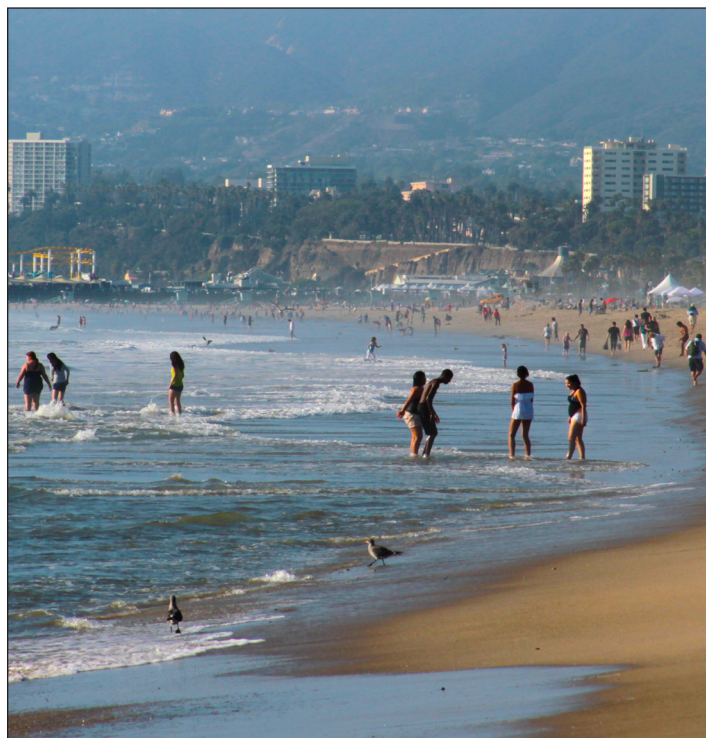
"This agreement is of major significance on two levels," said Heal the Bay's Mark Gold, president of the organization whose mission is to make Southern California's coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean. "It creates a project that will reduce a major pollution problem that really needs help, and it demonstrates that, although it's not easy, public/private

partnerships can occur for betterment of region. I feel this will be the first of many creative solutions needed for environmental problems."

The pilot program will install a series of trash racks designed to catch and remove debris from a segment of the Los Angeles County Drainage Area that flows through Compton. Each trash rack consists of a grated metal screen mounted on a frame that measures 37.25" high and 60" wide. The grated rack assembly is mounted on four 48" long metal bars with swivels and held in place by shear pins that break away to allow the catch to fall flat during heavy water flow.

Col. Mark Toy, commander of the Corps' Los Angeles District, said the agreement is partially the result of a recent Senior Leaders Conference.

"We talked about how we're operating in a different environment with today's funding constraints and



District and Heal the Bay partner on an environmental effort to install a series of trash racks designed to catch and remove debris, keeping it from reaching the ocean. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)

looked for new ways to do things," Toy said. "Today's agreement is the result. It's nice to come up with ideas, but they have to be put into action. We were able to do that right away. This is highly symbolic. We don't have to

just talk about public/private partnerships, but actually have an example of how it's done. Things like this are really important."

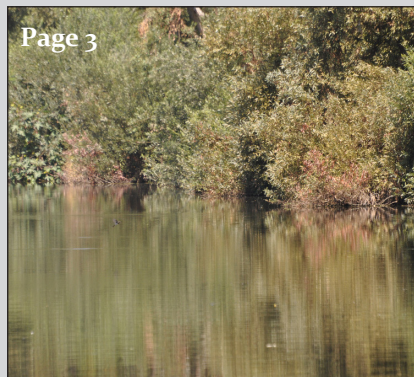
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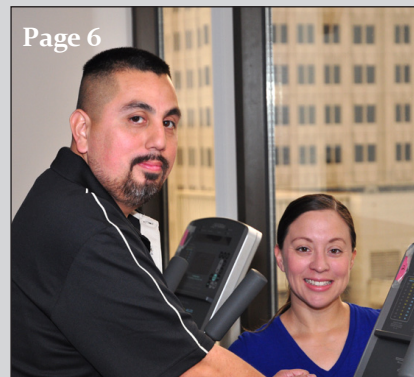
District is home to one of 15 new ECCVs located across the U.S.

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Turning "Adversity to Advantage" from Indian Bend Wash to the LA River.

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District employee doesn't wait for New Year's Resolutions to make changes.

Heal

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The impact of a successful pilot program will provide benefits far beyond the immediate of Compton Creek, the signatories said.

"Long Beach spends several million dollars to remove thousands of tons debris from its port yearly," Gold said. "We don't know exactly how much comes down the river, but each year during the Compton Creek cleanup, volunteers remove about ten tons of trash in three hours. Debris creates issues with flood control basins and wreaks havoc on the habitat. It's especially detrimental to aquatic resources and the environment."

Toy said he learned early in

his assignment to the District just how important a clean and environmentally safe Los Angeles River is to the area.

"My second day on the job, my team brought me to Compton Creek," he said. "In two weeks, the Acting Chief of Engineers will visit our district. We're taking him to the LA River."

The Corps expects work on the pilot project to start Monday.

"Let's get to work and get this project done," Gold said. "We have a creative means to move forward. It's community that needs this. This is the first step into turning Compton Creek into a community resource."

District gets state-of-the-art emergency response vehicle



By Greg Fuderer

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif. — The Los Angeles District will be well prepared for its next disaster response with the recent acquisition of one of the Corps' newest Emergency Command and Control Vehicles.

The ECCV, built on an International truck chassis, is a 47-foot vehicle designed to serve as a temporary mobile command post. It provides 11 work stations that each have a computer jack, 110- and 12-volt power sockets, and a phone that has cell, Voice over Internet Protocol and satellite capabilities. There is also onboard Wi-Fi capability to provide access for additional computers, and a rear compartment that houses a conference table, video camera and large screen TV for video conferencing.

Deploying four side-compartments, a satellite dish, radio antennas and emergency floodlights is a two-man, 15-minute evolution that allows responders near-immediate access to the equipment and capabilities necessary to conduct response and recovery operations in a disaster environment.

According to the Corps' website, ECCVs provide an expedient tactical operations and communications platform for first responders where there are no available facilities or communications to support response operations.

The Corps has 15 of the new ECCVs located across the continental United States. Mobile District maintains six, Sacramento District three, and Baltimore, Ft. Worth, Los Angeles, Nashville, Portland, Ore. and St. Louis districts one.



Mark Gold (left), president of Heal the Bay, and Col. Mark Toy sign the agreement whereby Heal the Bay will contribute funds for a pilot program designed to study the benefits of debris removal structures in Compton Creek. (USACE photo by Greg Fuderer)

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COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Turning "Adversity to Advantage" From Indian Bend Wash to the Los Angeles River

By Col. Mark Toy

In 1959, the City of Scottsdale, Arizona took major steps to address the flood control problems that had been plaguing it since the 1890's. With the establishment of the Maricopa County Flood Control District, and through collaboration with the Federal Government and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), a project was born. Indian Bend Wash (IBW) is a 7-mile stretch of depressed land that runs north to south and bisects the city center of Scottsdale, AZ. Before the completion of the project, precipitation north of the city used to funnel through IBW causing the wash to turn into a raging torrent.

Clearly, the City of Scottsdale, AZ wanted to protect their city from flash flooding and the damages that almost always resulted. While following the typical process for seeking federal aid, the city ultimately secured authorization and funding for the IBW project from Congress. By December 1961, USACE had completed its design for IBW; the result, a concrete-lined channel very similar to the one that USACE built in Los Angeles, CA in the 1930's. Unfortunately, this design was not to the liking of Scottsdale Citizens and the surrounding communities. Moreover, resource constraints in terms of limited budgets were plaguing the Nation at the time.

The project languished for several years while the City of Scottsdale worked an alternate plan. However, through an incredible effort by visionaries in the local government and the private sector, the City of Scottsdale developed a "Greenbelt Idea" that proposed a series of parks, golf courses, lakes and channels to replace the current design of a strictly concrete-lined channel. Construction of the Greenbelt required a combination of public and private responsibilities and expenditures. With USACE approval in 1970, a phased construction began which led to the project's final phase completion in 1980.

IBW is an outstanding example of how a willing sponsor, public-private cooperation, and the technical expertise of USACE combined to design and build a multi-use Greenbelt area that incorporated both flood control and recreational opportunities. In 1975, the National Society of Professional Engineers selected IBW as one of the top 10 engineering achievements in the United States.

Today, the Los Angeles District, USACE finds itself in a similar predicament that it faced at IBW in the '60s and '70s with its "Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Project." Once again, National-level resource constraints are preventing the L.A. River project from receiving federal funding to complete the study. At SPL's recent Senior Leader Conference (SLC) in OCT 2011, senior leaders recommended "public-private cooperation" as one of the many solutions to addressing the funding shortfall.

Other similarities include:

- A Willing Sponsor: The L.A. City Council, led by Councilman Ed Reyes, is helping generate momentum to ensure that the L.A. River Revitalization Plan is receiving national attention. Furthermore, the sponsor wants to advance \$1 million towards the project to ensure its continued progress and eventual design completion.

- A Multi-use Approach: While IBW combined flood control (now flood risk management) and recreation in its design, the L.A. River Ecosystem Restoration Project will similarly combine flood risk management, recreation, and ecosystem restoration.

- SPL Open to Different Approaches: Once again, it is not just about flood-control. SPL's current leadership is engaging multiple agencies to ensure a comprehensive and all-inclusive approach to solving this problem. SPL has reached out to non-profit agencies like

Friends of the L.A. River (FOLAR) and Heal the Bay (HTB) to help continue the momentum and keep the L.A. River in the national spot-light.

Once again, SPL finds itself at a cross-road; particularly with respect to its L.A. River Ecosystem Restoration Project. Given the similar circumstances that SPL faced in the 1960's at IBW, there is an incredible opportunity for a successful outcome. SPL senior leaders realize that the current economic environment requires that USACE not continue to operate in a "business as usual" mode. In order to be successful, SPL must continue to ensure that the L.A. River receives national attention.

Recently, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Program named the L.A. River a watershed of national significance. Secondly, the Administration's America's Great Outdoor s initiative (turning all American's to the great outdoors) began in Los Angeles along the banks of the L.A. River. Finally, for the first time ever in collaboration with SPL, Angelinos were afforded the opportunity to kayak legally on the L.A. River through a pilot non-motorized boating program. As a result, this kayaking experience received national attention in the L.A. Times, National Public Radio, and the British Broadcasting Company. All of these actions have helped to highlight the benefits of the L.A. River Project.

Positive relationships with all parties involved in the L.A. River Ecosystem Restoration Project are at an all-time high. With adequate federal funding, the transformation of the L.A. River from concrete-lined channel to a "Greenbelt" similar to IBW is a definite possibility. Winfield Scott was the Army Chaplain who first had the idea of "turning the adversity of floodwaters into the advantage of enhanced lifestyle" in Scottsdale, AZ. As a result of his vision, IBW became an incredible success story. SPL hopes to recreate a similar outcome with the L.A. River as it continues "Building Strong and Taking Care of People!"



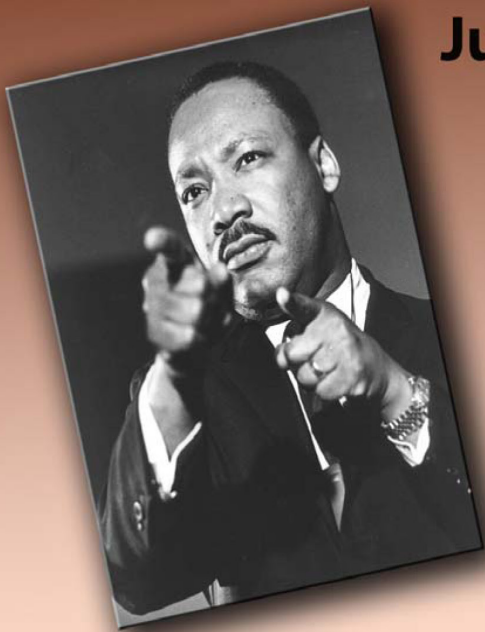
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of Engineers**
Los Angeles District



**12th Floor, District Conference Room
Tuesday, January 10, 2012 @ 10:00am**

Sponsored by the Los Angeles District Equal Employment Opportunities Office

Train to change and succeed

By Dave Palmer

LOS ANGELES — District Commander Col. Mark Toy told his leadership team during a strategic planning conference in October, “Training is an integral part of our strategic direction and the focus for my second year in command.”

The conference theme and year-long initiative is “Train to Change.” Participants spent three days working to identify what can be done differently, as an organization, to prepare employees for the District’s evolving mission.

Keynote speaker, retired Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers amplified the importance of education. “The organization has to buy in, in providing the opportunity for formal training sessions; leaders have to buy in for setting the proper climate for training; and individuals have to buy in by figuring out how to better do their jobs,” he said.

Training takes on many forms; on-the-job, resident, intern and online, to name a few, the latter continuing to grow in popularity. Problem is, how do you know what’s available and is it worth your time?

In an American Forces Press Service interview about “Learning Registry,” Frank C. DiGiovanni, director of training readiness and strategy in the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness, said “This is a place that educators and individuals can go to look at online learning content. And what’s different about this particular registry is that it uses networking techniques to ... populate it from authoritative sources and ... for people to be able to rate how good they think the content is.”

The Department of Defense and Department of Education announced the launch of the new resource in November.



The Learning Registry is a new approach for sharing, analyzing and rating resource content to benefit educators and learners.

“DOD was seen as a leader, and I think to this day remains a leader, in really looking at groundbreaking technologies – not only for the Department of Defense, but for the entire country,” DiGiovanni said.

DOD, in partnership with the Education Department, has served as the federal government’s executive agent for online learning technologies since the late 1990s. It was the Quadrennial Defense Review of 1996 where DOD identified the need to provide on-demand training for individuals and units worldwide.

To learn more about the Learning Registry visit their website www.learningregistry.org/about



Army finalizes STEM vehicle for recruiting trail

The Army will unveil the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Asset Vehicle Jan. 6, 2012, during All-American Bowl Week in San Antonio. Before the vehicle’s official launch in January, students from seven Maryland schools will have an opportunity for a hands-on look. (U.S. Army photo by Conrad Johnson)

BUILDING WELLNESS

An inspirational “Fit to Win” weight loss story

By Cecy Ordonez

Luis Perez, our Transportation Assistant, has undergone a transformation of both body and mind. I bring to you an inspirational snap shot of Luis's midpoint journey and how he has found the secret to weight loss. So far Luis has lost 28% of his weight and plans to continue until he meets his goal.

Q: What made you decide to start a weight loss plan?

A: Really it was something I have thought about doing for a long time now but I was either too lazy or always found an excuse not to do it. I had convinced myself that I was happy with myself, when in fact I was not. But the initial reason I started was something of a challenge from our new Supply Tech and my co-worker, Carlos. You see, he was a Marine and I was in the ARMY; he wanted to take advantage of the Fit To Win program and thought it would be more helpful to him if he had company. Being the competitive type, I couldn't let some Marine outdo me, so I said “yes” and I haven't stopped since.

Q: 312 pounds was a high starting weight, how did you manage looking at the road ahead of you?

A: On July the 26th of this year I weighed in at my heaviest I had ever been in my life. I was 312 lbs and I had no idea I was that big as I had always avoided the doctors office and a scale for the last five or six years. I had tried losing weight before but always stopped as I thought “this isn't for me” or “I can't do it” or “it's too much”. During my health screening, after finding out that scary number, you sat me down and told me even more horrible news. In addition to my weight, my blood pressure was too high and you told me that I couldn't exercise without a doctor's consent.

Q: Why do you think you are able to stick to your weight loss plan?

A: I took your advice to heart and I was very concerned with my health after my initial screening with you and then later my doctor. I didn't want anything to stop me at this point. The doctor put me on blood pressure medication; I changed my ways and started exercising. It became a game for me and I became addicted to the results. It's all math and numbers. There was no reason why I couldn't lose weight at this point in my mind, no cheat days and no breaks from exercising. No more excuses.

Q: What were your eating habits like before?

A: Its pretty embarrassing actually. I was the type to pile food on my plate until there was no room left. Then when I was done, I would get seconds. I used to skip breakfast for the most part or I would have some coffee and a muffin/bagel/donut or anything that was bad for me. I would sit and watch TV with my bowl of chips and dip and a beer. I really didn't overeat every meal but I typically would make up for it during dinner and my late night snacks. Another big factor with my weight was my occasional, or more than occasional, drink. I never really knew how many calories was in a typical cocktail



Luis Perez and his son taking a picture with Bobber at the 2011 Picnic on June 24th. 312 lbs.

or a beer for that matter.

Q: What are your new habits? New Foods?

A: No wacky diets or pills. I eat more often and I typically eat better, three meals a day and two snacks in between. I eat a lot of chicken compared to the red meat I would eat before. I wouldn't really say I eat a lot of new foods, I just mostly have changed my portions and I have cut out all sweets and don't drink anything but water or an occasional glass of milk on the weekends. My big secret is - calorie intake. I monitor and log everything that I put in my body using an app that you recommended called myfitnesspal on my iPhone. It helps me track my food, my workouts and my weight. To be honest I don't feel hungry ever. I also completely cut out alcohol from my diet, that alone was a major help to me losing the weight. Also I make sure to not eat anything three hours prior to going to bed.

Q: What are some of the new ways you are physically active?

A: Well besides working out religiously three times a week in the wellness center, my wife talked me into going on a hike at a nearby trail. I admit, at first it was really rough and I

worked up a mean sweat and got my heart rate up. Not even my gym workouts compare when I hit a long steep hill and I became obsessed. I now hike at a minimum once every week and sometimes two to three times a week. I have a local set of trails that are a 20 minute walk away from my house so I go as often as I can. On Sundays the whole family goes with me and we go to new trails and try our best not to get lost as we explore places and enjoy the views. I have also bought my whole gang a paintball gun and all of the accompanying equipment for Christmas and can't wait to introduce them to it as I loved this sport when I was a teenager. One of my favorite things we did this year was participate in Aids Walk LA. It's a 10K walk through Hollywood and my wife and oldest daughter loved it.

Q: What are things you can do now that you couldn't before, or were really difficult?

A: One of the things that I really use to hate was walk up that hill from the subway up to 915 Wilshire and now it's a piece of cake (that I won't eat by the way). Its helped my catch my regular subway and train more often than I can remember as I am more nimble and quick on my feet. The hiking was definitely something that I could have never imagined that I would be able to do let alone enjoy so much.

Q: What are you looking forward to as you continue your weight loss journey?

A: I look forward to looking good and wearing a pair of jeans, I haven't worn them in years because I hated the way they looked. I look forward to looking and feeling my age and I look forward to maintaining my weight once I reach my ultimate goal of 165.

Q: Do you have any quick take home weight loss tips for other members?



Luis has challenged himself to try new things... like hiking.

A: Exercise regularly, drink a lot of water, eat less (and watch every bite), get off the couch, have supportive people around you and prioritize what is more important to you!

Ask yourself, what is more important to you? One more bite... a piece of pie... or do you want to look and feel better and live a longer and happier life?



Luis, 92-pounds lost so far, pictured with the Army Health Promotion Coordinator Cecilia Ordóñez. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)



WINNERS REPORT NEWS

Los Angeles District Golf Club

Hansen Dam Booze Shoot, Dec. 17, 2011

FLIGHT	A	B	C
1ST	G. Mashburn	D. Cheung	J. Goldstein
2ND	J. Reeves	R. Andujo	M. Evasovic
3RD	G. Beams	A. Shak	W. Ong
Putts:	D. Sulzer	G. Ruiz	S. Murphy
Closest #7	J. Reeves	A. Shak	J. Goldstein
Low Gross	- G. Beams (83)		
Low Net	- D. Cheung (69)		
Birdies:	Cheung (2, 5, 10), Goldstein (7), Mashburn (3)		

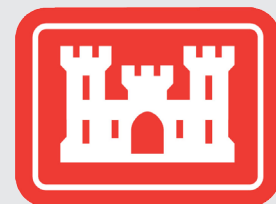
NEXT TOURNAMENT

Encino Golf Course (Sepulveda Dam)
Sat., Feb. 4 @ 8:45 am. Cost: \$44 if walking
Mike Evasovic, Secretary/Treasurer
L.A. District Golf Club
mmeasla@aol.com, (562) 592-4610

Corps Profile: Victoria Guilloty

Victoria is an engineering student working in the Logistics Management Activity over the past five months.

- In your own words, what is your job?** As a Logistics Management Student, my primary job is to learn all of the logistics management functions which include: Facilities Management, Transportation, Supply and Property Accountability.
- What do you love about your job?** I enjoy the environment that I work in and I love how friendly and helpful everyone is. I also enjoy being the only female in my department!!
- Any special moments/memories about your job you'd like to share?** Since our office works with practically everyone at the District, I enjoy moments when people think that I work for other divisions or organizations such as ACE-IT. Spending quality time with everyone in my office is always fun. Korean BBQ is amazing!!
- What do you do to make USACE great?** I assist everyone in our office and all of the District employees in all areas of logistics. Our office is working to automate and streamline some of processes and I will bring the knowledge and skills from school to improve on those processes.



SAFETY New Year's Resolutions You Can *Keep*

My very last New Year's resolution (in 2005) was as follows: "I will make no further New Year's resolutions." It has worked out quite well, thank you. I have been able to keep this one now for almost seven years and I intend to continue doing so. Sounds bizarre, I know, but there is a method to my madness! You see, the percentage of folks who actually keep their resolutions every year is not very good. Estimates vary from 50 percent to 90 percent – I guess no one has actually done a very good study – and those are not very good odds. If you're in that group, I suggest a different approach. Make some small but relevant resolutions throughout the year that have a greater chance of success. As time goes by, you'll build upon those achievements and, one day, you'll look back and realize that you've accomplished a great deal!

So, for your post-holiday cogitation, here are some easy-to-do suggestions (in no particular order) for resolutions you can do that will improve your life, health and safety, and keep your sanity in a warm, fuzzy place.

BRING YOUR LUNCH My wife and I have four adult children, so there's no longer a need to cook in mass, but I very much enjoy cooking. I still cook enough to feed everyone and then freeze the leftovers in single-portion containers to bring to work. The result is a considerable amount of money saved and a healthier diet. Fast food may be convenient, but the health quotient is usually pretty poor and I'm sure you can find better uses for the money you save.

SLOW DOWN Whether you're behind the wheel or on a project, or even on vacation, relax and take a deep breath and throttle yourself down to a realistic level. Superman and Wonder Woman are cartoon characters. You are not. If you're constantly pushing your limits, even the healthiest of us will hit a breaking point sooner or later. Find a good balance and do your best to keep it.

TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE These beasts have become seemingly indispensable attachments to the modern human being. In essence, we're becoming cyborgs! Look around any place you go and half the population is playing apps, answering emails in the middle of a conversation, texting as they cross the street, etc. I have a rule at home – "dinner's on, cell phones off. No like? No eat." And for heaven's sake, put it away when you're driving!! We've survived just fine without them for thousands of years. A couple of hours a day without it won't make or break you.

LAUGH Regularly and with gusto! Do you know anyone who goes through life grumpy? If so, I'll bet they aren't very healthy, not to mention happy. There's a direct link between good health and laughter. Everyday life is full of amusing moments!! Embrace them, laugh and enjoy!!

SLEEP No matter how young or healthy you are, you need enough sleep to recharge your physical and mental batteries.

READ Regularly, for pleasure. I combine this with #5 and read fantasy fiction novels almost every night in bed. It helps to calm me down, makes me sleepy and, most importantly, allows my brain to turn off all the business of the day.

BE GRATEFUL and show it. I cannot overemphasize this enough. One cannot be happy without having gratitude. Regularly show that gratitude by sharing your blessings with others. Even the smallest kindness to others makes the world a better place and you a better person. It's a Win-Win.

GET A FLU SHOT Influenza is largely preventable by being immunized. And if you do catch the flu, having had a flu shot will usually lessen the length and severity of the disease. Many of you may remember that we lost a co-worker during the swine flu pandemic two years ago....Rest in Peace, Joe.

So, if you'd like, pick one and get started. I recommend the Flu Shot first – low hanging fruit is the easiest to pick. Happy New Year to all!

And, as always, drive safe, drive sober and buckle up!
Steve

Family Matters Blog: Top 10 Military Family Moments of 2011

By Elaine Sanchez
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - It's that time of year when top 10 lists seem to proliferate across nearly every web and news page in the nation, proclaiming everything from the best movies and TV shows to the most memorable photos and celebrities of the year.

Since I find it tough to encapsulate a year's worth of information into a tidy list, I typically steer away from the concept. However, this was such a momentous year for military families that I decided it was time to hop on the list-making bandwagon.

So, here's my top 10 most memorable military family moments of 2011. It's certainly not all-inclusive, but I'm hoping it at least hits the highlights.

10. JR Martinez - Warrior Inspiration. This Army veteran and wounded warrior danced his way to the top spot on ABC's "Dancing With the Stars" -- and inspired a nation with his strength and resilience along the way. In 2003, Martinez was injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq, suffering severe burns to more than 40 percent of his body. He went on to share his story with audiences nationwide. In 2008, he landed a role as an Iraq war veteran on the ABC soap opera, "All My Children," which led to his "Dancing with the Stars" appearances this year.

"I have been able to be a role model and a voice for a lot of [troops] who don't feel that they have a voice for themselves," Martinez said during a Pentagon Channel interview. "I've been able to

be a source of inspiration to the families as well, to say good things do happen and you've just got to be patient and have a great attitude."

Martinez recently scored another big win: he and his girlfriend, Diana Gonzalez-Jones, are expecting their first child, a girl, in the spring.

9. The Office of Servicemember Affairs opened for business. As the military arm of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, this office is intended to strengthen military families financially and to serve as an advocate on their behalf. The office has a threefold mission: to ensure families are given a quality financial education, to monitor consumer complaints and the response to those complaints, and to work with other federal and state agencies to help resolve issues.

In an interview this summer, Holly Petraeus, the office's assistant director, told me she's thrilled to be in a position to help service members and their families.

"My ultimate dream is that no service member signs a contract that they end up regretting for years or signing one that isn't fair," she said. "We can write rules and enforce at CFPB, and I'd love to see the real bad actors that go after service members -- break the law to harm them financially -- I'd like to see them enforced against."

8. Sesame unveiled "Military Families Near and Far." These products, which include a bilingual website

and mobile application, encourage elementary school-aged children to express their emotions and to

communicate as they undergo challenging military transitions. The resources are a team effort by Sesame Street and The Electric Company, and are provided in cooperation with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Sesame's previous efforts to help military children have been aimed at preschoolers. These new products will enable them to reach older children in an entertaining way, H. Melvin Ming, Sesame Workshop president and CEO, told me during the launch event in November. "One size does not fit all," he noted. "Children learn best when the message is age-appropriate."

7. Technology boosts support. This year, we've seen the Defense Department and other organizations launch a host of technology-based tools aimed at helping troops, veterans and their families. For example, DcOE's National Center for Telehealth and Technology developed mobile apps that help users cope with psychological concerns, and aid providers in diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder and TBI. One example is Life Armor, a mobile app that serves as a resource for families experiencing common post-deployment issues. Find out more about these helpful apps here.

Additionally, TRICARE

and Express Scripts Inc. launched a TRICARE Express RX mobile app and mobile-optimized website in July. These tools allow TRICARE beneficiaries to manage their prescriptions and access important health information safely and securely from anywhere using their smart phone.

These are just a few examples of the leaps in technology-based military support this year. From smart phone apps to virtual counseling and support, I'll be excited to see what sprouts up this year and in the years ahead.

6. Veteran employment initiatives. In November, President Barack Obama announced executive orders to give tax credits to employers who hire post-9/11 veterans and wounded warriors, as well as enhanced career counseling and related services for veterans.

As reported by my colleague Donna Miles, the president announced a new Returning Heroes Tax Credit that will provide companies up to \$5,600 in credits for each unemployed veteran they hire. Similarly, a new Wounded Warriors Tax Credit offers employers up to \$9,600 for each veteran with service-connected disabilities they hire.

The president also unveiled two new Internet-based job search tools for unemployed veterans: My Next Move for Veterans, where veterans can browse career options and translate their military experience to a civilian application, and the Veterans Job Bank, where veterans can seek jobs posted by companies committed to hiring them.



5. The Job Fair Movement. Also aimed at employment, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sponsored about 75 veteran and spouse hiring fairs around the country, with a goal of hosting 100 hiring fairs within a year. And the chamber has committed to hosting 300-400 additional hiring fairs for veterans and military spouses around the country in 2012, Navy Capt. Bradley Cooper, executive director of the Joining Forces campaign, told me in an interview last month.

In mid-January, the chamber will host its first military-spouse-only hiring fair and career forum, looking to bring together more than 100 employers and more than 1,000 spouses.

There's also been an emergence of virtual hiring fairs, which is an asset to people unable to attend a hiring fair due to distance or who want to see what's available in other locations. Milicruit hosted a virtual fair recently that included more than 24,000 jobs from nearly 70 employers with more than 30,000 veterans and spouses engaged in the process.

4. Military Spouse Employment Partnership. This DOD program is aimed at expanding career opportunities for military spouses worldwide, and to recognize the skills and talents they bring to the employment table. The program's website lists more than 70,000 jobs for military spouses.

Since its launch in June, the partnership has grown from 72 companies to 96, and has led to the hiring of more than 8,000 military spouses.

3. Strengthening Our Military Families. In January, President Barack Obama unveiled a governmentwide

plan to strengthen military family support. The plan was based on a yearlong review summarized in the report "Strengthening our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment."

The report outlines four key areas which the whole-of-government effort plans to address: enhancing military families' well-being and psychological health; developing military spouse career and education opportunities; increasing child care availability and quality; and ensuring excellence in military children's education and development.

In total, Obama said, his administration is making nearly 50 specific commitments to military families. But the government can't accomplish this mission alone.

"Government has its responsibilities," he said. "One percent of Americans may be fighting our wars, but a hundred percent of Americans need to be supporting our troops and their families -- a hundred percent."

2. The Joining Forces campaign. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, announced this landmark military-support initiative in April. Joining Forces aims to raise awareness of military families and spark all Americans -- from citizens and communities, to businesses and nonprofit groups to take action to ensure troops and their families have the support they need and deserve. The initiative focuses on three areas: employment, education and wellness.

"This campaign is about all of us, all of us joining

together as Americans to give back to the extraordinary military families who serve and sacrifice so much every day so we can live in freedom and security," the first lady said at the White House's campaign launch.

The campaign has made tremendous inroads in tackling veteran and spouse employment in recent months, Cooper said. In about three months, the campaign went from teaming with 100 companies to more than 1,500, and from 1,500 people hired to nearly 20,000. These companies aim to hire upward of 135,000 veterans and spouses over the next couple of years, he added.

1. Iraq War Ends. After nearly nine years, the war in Iraq ended, and the final group of U.S. troops returned home Dec. 20 -- just in time for the holidays.

The nation owes a debt to all service members and their families, President Barack Obama said Dec. 15.

"This moment of success is because of their sacrifice," he said. "More than 1.5 million Americans have served in Iraq. More than 30,000 of these brave men and women were wounded. Nearly 4,500 gave their lives. America's military families have borne a heavy burden.

"As we mark the end of this war, we need to show our veterans and their families that they have the thanks of a grateful nation," he added. "Part of ending a war responsibly is standing by those who have fought it. It's not enough to honor our heroes with words; we must do so with deeds."

That's my top 10, but I'd be remiss if I didn't add a shout out to military families worldwide. In this past year, some families



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endured the terrible pain of losing a military loved one to combat or illness. Others sat by a bedside day and night, praying for the speedy recovery of their child or spouse who returned home with the visible or invisible wounds of war. And still others held down home fronts, bolstering their children through deployments and long separations.

As in every year of this past decade of war, these families have weathered 2011 with amazing resilience and strength.

I'd like to join the rest of the nation in saying thank you for your service and your sacrifice.

In Memoriam: Kevin Inada



LOS ANGELES — A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District employee with over 29 years of federal service passes.

"It is with great sadness for me to inform our Corps Family of the passing on Jan. 1 of our Deputy Division Chief of Construction, Kevin Inada," said Col. Mark Toy, District Commander.

"Kevin was a wonderful husband, father and colleague. For me personally, this is a tragic loss as I consider Kevin more than just a professional colleague, but a personal friend," added Toy.

Inada worked on a wide range of projects for the District; first as a Program Manager and the last four years as Deputy Division Chief of Construction.

"He was the best deputy that I've ever seen, certainly had potential to be a chief," said John Keever, chief of the Los Angeles District Construction Division. "He was not only someone that I worked with... he was a friend."

"What struck me most about Kevin when I saw him every time was his incredibly positive attitude," said Toy. "He was always an absolute pleasure to work with. I will approach 2012 with a New Year's resolution of always trying to maintain a positive attitude...Kevin did this everyday...I will honor him by trying to do the same. I will miss him very much. Rest in peace my friend."

Toy asked that the District keep the Inada family in their thoughts and prayers during this very difficult time.

Inada is survived by his wife Judy and their son Ben.



Kevin Inada was known for his warm smile and can-do attitude.



TRICARE Beneficiaries Have Several Pharmacy Options

By Cheryl Pellerin
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, - Despite questions about whether the Walgreens pharmacy chain will continue as a TRICARE provider, beneficiaries will have several options for filling prescriptions, Defense Department spokeswoman Eileen M. Lainez said today.

The retail pharmacy contract between Express Scripts Inc., or ESI, and the Walgreens pharmacy chain is set to expire on Dec. 31, she added.

If the contract is not renewed, Walgreens will no longer be a pharmacy network provider, Lainez said, but beneficiaries will be able to find a nearby network pharmacy using the "find a pharmacy" feature at the ESI website, <http://www.express-scripts.com/tricare>.

"We are committed to ensuring all our pharmacy beneficiaries are aware of the many options that TRICARE makes available to them," said Army Brig. Gen. Bryan Gamble, TRICARE deputy director. "By now, all of our beneficiaries who

use Walgreens to fill prescriptions should have been contacted to advise them of their pharmacy options and to take action to ensure their pharmacy benefit remains uninterrupted. The health of our service members, retirees and their families remains my number one priority."

In addition to 56,000 network pharmacies, Lainez said, TRICARE beneficiaries have other pharmacy options, including military pharmacies at no cost; and convenient, low-cost TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery.

Beneficiaries can check the TRICARE website at <http://www.tricare.mil> for more information.

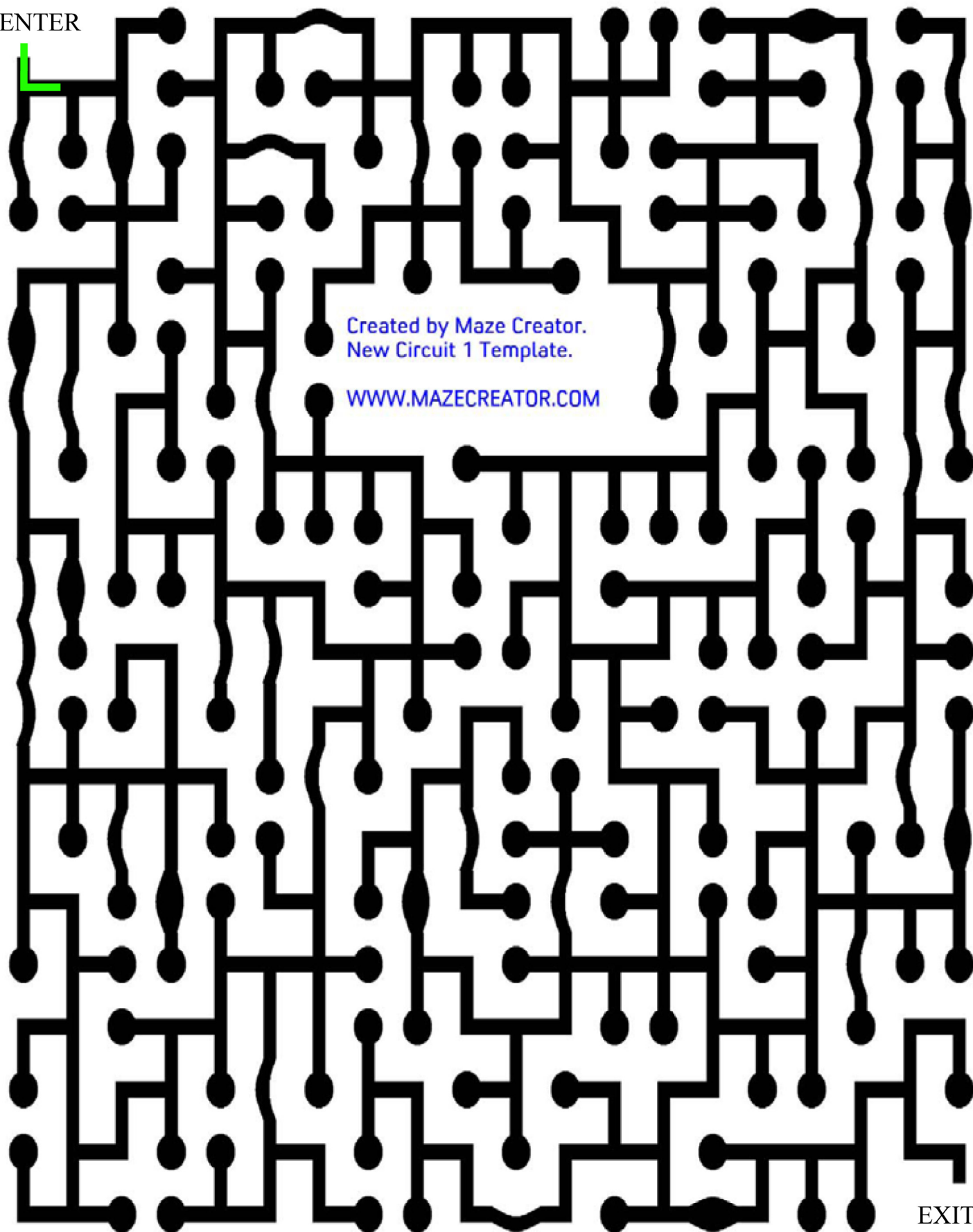
ESI has mailed information or contacted beneficiaries who use Walgreens by telephone, and in December, they followed up with reminder letters.

If needed, beneficiaries can take current prescription bottles to a new network pharmacy to have prescriptions transferred.

Beneficiaries who need help finding a pharmacy or changing their medications to home delivery, or who have other questions, can contact Express Scripts at 1-877-885-6313.

BREAK TIME

ENTER



FINAL WORD

New Year, old year – now is your time

By Daniel J. Calderón

My favorite part of every day is dawn. I love seeing the sun coming up over the horizon and knowing the light is shining on a brand new day. It brings to mind the possibilities that the day might bring. I mean, most people do have a plan for the day; but, as John Lennon sang, “Life is what happens while you’re busy making other plans,” and life has a way of moving you through the day in ways you never really expect. With each new dawn, there are new possibilities, new opportunities for life to surprise me.

I guess that’s why I like the beginning of the year, too.

During the Christmas (or holiday) season, I take time to reflect on what I’ve done or not done during the year. I remember what we used to do when I was a kid visiting family and I take time to miss (as I reminisce) loved ones who I’ll never see again. I use the closing of the year to take stock of what has been and see if there are any opportunities I might not have utilized to their fullest.

I take a look at my kids and realize they’re getting older at a much faster rate than I like. I look at the previous year’s Christmas picture and compare it to the one we just took and I see how much they’ve changed. Then, inevitably, I take a look at older pictures and then see just how fast time is passing. This year, I look back in wonder at the fact that I have been back home for a full year from the war. That fact astounds me sometimes when I consider some of the things I saw overseas; but we’ll leave that for another musing.

At the dawn of the New Year, I like to take a look at the possibilities that lie ahead of me. This is the last year I’ll be in my 30s so there is that clichéd Bucket List. I have things I want to try before I turn 40. Naturally, there are things I want to try after that, but there is stuff I wanted to do before I hit that strange barrier between youth and middle age. As I ponder 2012, I don’t really feel a sense of loss or uncertainty as I stare at “the big four-oh” coming up at me.

I see it as another challenge. Just how much can I get done this year before my birthday gets to me? Of course, I might not have long to live after my birthday if the whole Mayan thing is right (for the record, I don’t think it is. People have been

predicting the end of the world since it began and no one’s been on the money so far), but I figure I’ll get all the fun in while I can still draw breath.

What are some of the things on my list? I want to take an ocean cruise where I won’t have to wear my uniform. I want to see if I can get a race car place where I can get going at more than 100mph just to see what it feels like. I want to finally finish a book (that I’ve written) and get it off to a publisher to see whether or not I can get it put out to the public. I want

to write a play and have it performed. I want to buy a full-sized video game or pinball machine for my house. I want to learn to play the guitar.

There are quite a few more things on my list; but, it’s my list after all and no one ever really knows all there is to know about anyone else.

I want this year to be exciting. I am excited about all the things that are possible. I am looking forward to new adventures –both expected and unexpected. I think it’s a great thing to have a plan for what’s coming; but, it’s how you deal with what you never envisioned that really shows your character.

What’s on your list for this year? Will you finally get up the nerve to try that new little restaurant you’ve had your eye on for the last several months? If you’re single and waiting to work up the nerve to ask out that cute individual you’ve seen at the grocery store or at the gym, now may be your time. How about that special trip you’ve been promising yourself? Or, maybe it’s finally time to try an adventure like skydiving, learning to fly a plane or maybe finally trying out mountain biking (because you do know DoD civilians can check out equipment from most military base’s Outdoor Adventure Shop) in a Corps recreation area or national park.

Whatever it is you’ve been wanting to try, as long as it’s not going to hurt someone, I think you should give it a go. When you reach the time in your life when your blood runs slowly and you spend more time reminiscing than doing, that’s when you can look back at your accomplishments and wonder just how you were able to squeeze so much living into your life. That’s not the time to sit back and wish you’d tried something. Now is the time to empty your bucket and get to crossing things off your list.

Today is your present. Use it wisely. Just a thought...



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