



Farewell, Colonel Toy

As the district commander transitions to his next post at USACE Headquarters, he speaks about some of the district's accomplishments and the legacy he hopes will endure beyond his time as commander: 'Building Strong and Taking Care of People'



NewsCastle Editorial Staff

Colonel Mark Toy, Los Angeles District commander, sat down with the editorial staff of NewsCastle to answer questions about his time in command and his future endeavors. For the past three years, he has led the district, which encompasses about 226,000 square miles in Southern California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah, and has a current annual budget of about \$352 million for civil works projects, military construction, and interagency and international support.

Col. Toy will be relinquishing command of the district July 11. During his command, the district made continuous strides in reducing the risk of flood damage along area waterways, including the modification of Prado Dam in Corona, as well as on environmental restoration projects like the revitalization of the Los Angeles River, on coastal shoreline restoration, and on maintenance of navigation channels at more than a dozen commercial and recreational harbors along the California coast.

NewsCastle: What do you feel is the most significant accomplishment you made during your time in command?

Col. Toy: I think one of the most significant accomplishments has been inculcating the idea that we are building strong and taking care of people, and making the people of this organization the foundation for everything we do.

NewsCastle: How do you feel you've done?

Col. Toy: Well, when I first came on board in July, 2010, and did my assessment, I saw that we had a pretty tired force that was just coming off the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funding, which might be looked back on as the boom days of the district and involved a lot of great construction for the nation. So, as I looked to see what we needed as a District, I thought we should get back to basics, where we

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(From left) John Keever, Muhammad Bari, Command Sgt. Maj. Dale Perez, Col. Mark Toy, Peter Tunnicliffe, Brig. Gen. Ted Martin and Col. Kurt Pinkerton break ground during a ceremony June 28 commemorating the start of construction of the new water treatment plant at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District is overseeing the construction of the design-build effort by CDM Smith Construction to provide six million gallons of water per day to the inhabitants of the NTC. (Photo by Brooks O. Hubbard IV)

Corps breaks ground for \$100 million water treatment plant at Fort Irwin

Brooks O. Hubbard IV

FORT IRWIN, Calif.--The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for a \$100 million water treatment plant for Fort Irwin and the National Training Center June 28.

The facility is a design-build effort by CDM Smith Construction to provide six million gallons of water per day to the inhabitants of the NTC.

"One of the things that I'm most proud of is the partnership we created between the Corps of Engineers and the Fort Irwin garrison," said Col. Mark Toy, commander of the Los Angeles District. "I know the Fort Irwin installation has a choice of who they want to work with, and we are very grateful that you chose the Army Corps of Engineers to do your project management and construction engineering management."

Fort Irwin Garrison Commander Col. Kurt Pinkerton welcomed the attending guests and spoke about the need for the new facility.

According to Pinkerton, 50,000 soldiers train at the NTC annually and 85 percent of the post's permanently assigned community live on the post,

which adds up to a very significant amount of water consumed and used for day-to-day operations.

The population of on-post inhabitants is anticipated to increase to 95 percent, but construction of the final phase of the post family housing can't be done until the water treatment plant is completed to provide water to the additional housing.

The three-year construction project will replace the current multi-treatment system as well as use new technologies to process the water to meet state and federal standards.

The new plant will use a three-

stage, electro-dialysis reversal water treatment plant that treats all contaminants found in Fort Irwin's ground water in accordance with federal and state requirements. The plant will include: an EDR primary treatment, lime softening clarifiers, lime solids thickeners, lime sludge lagoons, reverse osmosis filters, brine treatment facility, concentrate equalization basins and a mechanical evaporator tower and feed tank, and three evaporation ponds to achieve the post's 99 percent water recovery rate.

The project also includes water system improvement and supporting utilities and infrastructure upgrades.



An artist's rendering of the water treatment plant shows what the facility will look like upon completion. (Illustration courtesy of CDM Smith)

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Dear District Teammates:

As I sit at my desk overlooking the bustling 110 freeway with Dodger Stadium and the "Hollywood" sign on the horizon, I am simply amazed that I have been with the Los Angeles District for nearly three years. Because you see, a three year assignment in the Army is a very long time. In fact, the longer that I have served in the Army, my Family and I have been more accustomed to picking up and moving in two year increments. Three years has been wonderful!

I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to serve as your Commander. During my tenure, I have traveled across the entire District area of responsibility: from San Diego along 420 miles of coastline to Morro Bay, east to Las Vegas, south through Phoenix and Tucson, and so many wonderful places in between. The projects that the Los Angeles District has built have changed lives for the better. Since 1898, you and your predecessors have been providing world class engineering solutions responding to the needs of the Nation, the environment and the public ~ and you have done this extremely well.

And while the massive flood control structures and acres of restored habitat are sights to behold, these engineering marvels are not the things that I will remember most about my time in command. Without question, my thoughts, memories and reflections will be of the wonderful PEOPLE in the Los Angeles District.

For three years, we have been BUILDING STRONG and Taking Care of People! As an organization, I am so proud

to have made PEOPLE the foundation for everything we do. Your leadership team created seven "PEOPLE initiatives" (In/Out Processing & Sponsorship, Mentorship, Performance

Management, Awards & Recognition, Training, Project Management Processes, and Facilities) and have spent three years developing innovative programs in three focus areas (PEOPLE, TRAINING, and FACILITIES) devoted to taking care of people. The results are outstanding and I hope you have seen a difference in how we now show appreciation for our fellow teammates.

On July 11th, I will relinquish command and hand the guidon to my successor. Three years ago, I thought that my posting to the Los Angeles District would be my last assignment in the Army. Since I grew up in Huntington Beach, I felt like I had come full circle so that retirement would be an easy and logical choice. But, serving with all of you has inspired me to continue my service to the Nation. On August 1st, I will report to Headquarters

and assume my new duties as Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Thank you for making my assignment in the Los Angeles District a highlight in my 26 year Army career. I depart with a profound sense of satisfaction and a deep appreciation of the talent and dedication of the PEOPLE in the Los Angeles District. Please continue to appreciate one another and hold our motto close to your heart: BUILDING STRONG and Taking Care of People!

Warm Regards,
Col. Toy



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make people the foundation for everything we do. I identified three focus areas: people, training and facilities, and the management team helped develop seven initiatives within those focus areas that really concentrate on taking care of people. We formed committees in all of those areas, and making progress has been a consistent goal throughout my command. We would discuss the things we've accomplished on a monthly basis, and, more importantly, determine what the way ahead would be based on those initiatives. Then, over the three years, we've had training conferences and leadership conferences to further hone those initiatives. We've gotten better and better and stayed consistent throughout the time I've been here. I'm really happy with what the District has accomplished in those areas. That theme, that model, has not changed throughout the time I've been here.

NewsCastle: Have you gotten good feedback?

Col. Toy: The feedback has been great, but, really for me, I know people get it, because of what they tell me during the out briefs I've had with those individuals who have either left the organization because they've found other places to work or they have retired after many years of great service. I always ask them what they will miss most about leaving Los Angeles District, and all of them say the same thing...all of them say they are going to miss the folks they have worked with. And, that is an indication to me of what makes this organization great, that people are saying it is all about the people. We build great things for the nation. There is no

doubt the Corps of Engineers is a national treasure, and we do so many different things that make our nation great, but one of the things I think we do best in the Corps is that we take care of people. I think if there is a legacy I'd like to leave in the district it is for people to

know me as the guy who brought that motto and that thinking to the district.

NewsCastle: What have been some of your least favorite aspects command?

Col. Toy: The least favorite is how long, sometimes, it takes to get things done, and that really has nothing to do with the folks in the district doing their jobs. It has to do with the processes, but I think we are making great strides. We are doing a lot of studies and a lot of construction that has taken many years as a result of the type of funding we get. We don't get all of the funding for a project in one fiscal year, especially in civil works projects. And, the checks and balances are in place for a reason, but sometimes that is a little frustrating. When you are out in a unit, you get a mission and you drive to accomplish it, so the timeframe is a lot smaller, and that is the kind of mindset I had when I got here. I've learned throughout my time here that a lot of coordination needs to occur, not only within the district but at division and at headquarters, but, ultimately, we get to the endpoint. I've appreciated that whole process, and even though it might be one of the least things I've enjoyed, I know it happens for a reason.

NewsCastle: Have you accomplished the goals you set for yourself?

Col. Toy: I probably didn't accomplish everything I wanted to, because, as a commander, you want to strive to reach a vision or a strategic direction. And, really, there is no endgame in this, because you always know you can do better. I think, more than anything, I've wanted to make sure this whole idea of taking care of people reaches everyone in the organization and everybody believes it, and three years isn't enough time for that. We have people in this organization who have worked here for more than 40 years, and they have seen a lot of different commanders who have had a lot of different ideas. But, I think that the idea of taking care of people should carry on, and it will never have an endgame, because you can never do enough for your people to make things better in their workplace.

NewsCastle: If you could stay longer, would you?

Col. Toy: Absolutely! But, we have to give other people a chance to command. That is one of the things I love about the Army, but command is such a fleeting moment. I've been in the Army 26 years, and the actual time I've been in command has been a small fraction, so I've cherished it. Plus, if anyone would give me more time to be a part of this great district, I'd certainly take it. That is part of the reason why I'm not ready to retire right now, because I've been offered the opportunity to carry on in another capacity at our headquarters. I'm really excited to bring the idea of taking care of people to headquarters in the hopes that it will trickle down to other people in the organization.



NewsCastle: What is your next assignment?

Col. Toy: I've been asked by Lt. Gen. Bostick (commanding general of USACE) to serve as his chief of staff. After I change command on July 11 and turn command over to my successor, I'll take some vacation with my family, and then I'll report to Washington, D.C. on August 1st. I'm really excited about working with a whole new team and learning again. This will be part of my development as a leader, as I'm still a work in progress, but I've learned so much from so many people in this district who have worked for the Army Corps of Engineers for a long time. I've learned so much, and I know I'll be able to take that with me.

NewsCastle: What will you miss the least?

Col. Toy: I will definitely not miss the traffic and the commute. But, I really don't think about what I'm not going to miss as opposed to what I will miss, which is the great people of this organization, but they will carry on and continue to do great things, and I will be watching from afar.

NewsCastle: What lessons from this experience will you take with you?

Col. Toy: I think most of the lessons will be about the Corps' processes. I've spent 26 years in the Army, and 23 years of that time has been on the tactical side, so I'm very comfortable with combat engineering and construction engineering. But, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' civil works processes are complex and hard to fully master. I think going to the headquarters will enable me to continue learning about those processes, and I will be bringing the district mentality and the challenges faced at the district-level. I'll try to help the people at division and headquarters determine how to better facilitate the job for those on the ground who are directly making things happen locally in the different cities and counties across the country.

NewsCastle: What would you tell someone who is just coming into the Corps?

Col. Toy: One of the most exciting things I've done while in the district is reinvigorate and continue to support the intern program. I've loved the times I've gone out to the different schools, from elementary schools to high schools to colleges, to talk to people about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), but also about careers in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Even though we have some program challenges right now, we still have to continue to build the bench and bring great people into the organization. I've told the new people coming in to find a mentor, talk to someone about what they want to do to reach personal and professional goals, and figure out what they want to do in the Corps. They can reach their goals here, and that is why the Corps is such a great organization.

NewsCastle: What do you do about people who do not seem happy?

Col. Toy: Well, I'm glad you asked that, because taking care of people also means taking care of the individuals who may not be in the right seat on the bus. I think everyone has a passion for something. For those individuals who are working in the Corps who are not happy coming to work, they need to find what their passion is, and it might be outside of the Corps. We as leaders, supervisors, and mentors have a responsibility to discuss that with them. You always want to see someone be successful, but for those people who are not doing the right thing in the Corps it is possible we can help them find fulfillment in a different part of the organization or in a different organization altogether. I think that makes an organization better as a whole, because you want people in the district who want to be there. It makes things better for everyone else.

NewsCastle: What are some of the more memorable projects you've been involved in?

Col. Toy: For me, it has been the Los Angeles River. I found out on my second day on the job how important that study is going to be. I was out on a tributary of Compton Creek with then EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and White House Chair for the Counsel of Environmental Quality Nancy Sutley, and they were talking about how important the LA River is and how it will transform. Most of us know the LA River is that concrete structure from the Hollywood movies, a flood control structure, and that it gets fuller during the rainy season and helps torrential rains to flow from the mountains all the way to Long Beach and empty into the ocean. But, it is more than that. We've found, with the LA River study, that we can combine flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and recreation. That recreation piece has been a big part, as we've opened up, for the first time, two sections for kayaking that really connect people with the river. During my command, we've worked on that study, and we are about to finish. And, with all of the studies we do in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, we want to get to construction. So, hopefully, we'll be doing the construction for that ecosystem project in the next couple of years.

NewsCastle: How do you want to say good-bye?

Col. Toy: As I finish my last 30 days on the job, I'm trying to make sure to tell everyone "thank you!" Thank you for helping me develop as a leader and as your commander. It has been a humbling experience. Normal commands are about two years, and I've had three wonderful years learning from many wonderful people. I would like to tell everyone to continue doing their job, but don't be a stranger. I won't be very far away. Again, not only in Los Angeles District, people are the foundation of a great organization. And, although I'm leaving and going to headquarters, I want people to remember that everything we do, all the projects we do, come down to "building strong and taking care of people." Thank you for the opportunity to work with you, and I wish everyone the absolute best.

Colonel Turner assumes command of South Pacific Division

South Pacific Division Public Affairs

SAN FRANCISCO--Col. C. David Turner accepted Command of the South Pacific Division from the Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Tom Bostick, during a ceremony June 19 at the Bay Model Visitor Center in Sausalito, Calif., Turner assumed command from Col. Andrew Nelson, who will resume duties as the division deputy commander.

Turner previously served as the Chief of Staff, Headquarters, USACE, since February 2013.

After passing the Corps of Engineers flag, symbolizing the change

of command, Turner emphasized his desire to visit each area of the division.

"I look forward to working with the command team, the members of this important South Pacific Division and look forward to getting out to the districts; learning and listening about your mission," Turner said.

Turner stressed the importance of sustaining existing partnerships and developing new ones across the spectrum of stakeholders in the division's area.

"To our partners, I will listen to you. What you have to say is very important," said Turner. "I look forward to forging new chapters in this great division's lineage."

Bostick commented on the quality of leadership he has seen this year within South Pacific Division.

"It may seem like a short time, but a lot has happened in these months, and Colonel Nelson and the team here have carried a heavy load in terms of execution," Bostick said.

According to the Bostick, the incoming commander is a people person who takes command of the South Pacific Division after being in the middle of a lot of tough assignments.

"He comes to the division with a tremendous wealth of experience," said Bostick. "So we are very fortunate to have him here."



Lt. Gen. Tom Bostick, Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, passes the South Pacific Division's Colors to Col. C. David Turner during a Change of Command ceremony June 19 at the Bay Model Visitor Center in Sausalito, Calif. Col. Turner became the 55th Commander of the South Pacific Division after assuming command from Col. Andrew Nelson, who is resuming duties as the Division Deputy Commander. (Photo by South Pacific Division Public Affairs)

Corps, partners move forward with watershed-based budgeting

Greg Fuderer

LOS ANGELES – “When I went through my pre-command course, Secretary Darcy told us that watershed-based budgeting was the future of where the Corps wanted to go, what it wanted to do,” said District Commander Col. Mark Toy at a workshop June 27 at the district’s headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

“I’m very excited that watershed-based budgeting has started right here,” he added. “It’s a revolutionary change in the way the Corps does business, and it’s happening now. This train is going to go, no matter what. We’re talking about more than one business line here.”

What the nearly three dozen participants (from a variety of federal, state, county and city agencies) at the Santa Ana River Watershed-Budget Pilot Year 2 Workshop were talking about is a change in project management philosophy, one in which the district and its Santa Ana River Mainstem partners are playing a leading role.

Last year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers selected a proposal from the Mainstem group as its model for watershed-based project planning, a significant and critical step in securing funds for future water resources projects. For the Corps, the goal is to maximize “value to the nation,” where projects provide significant benefits to economic growth, the environment and the social well-being of the nation.

The Santa Ana River drains a 2,650 square mile basin along its 96-mile course that runs from the San Bernardino Mountains past Redlands, Riverside, Corona and Anaheim before meeting the Pacific Ocean at Huntington Beach.

The Santa Ana River Mainstem project is a collection of flood risk reduction projects, with some environmental protection and restoration efforts and forays into water conservation and supply thrown in for good measure. The need for the project arose in the late 1930s when floods devastated towns, roads and railways along the river, and culminated in the construction of Prado Dam just outside Corona.

Developing agreement about concerns and priorities among agencies as diverse as flood control and water conservation districts, utilities agencies, land management agencies, disadvantaged communities and public works departments is not an easy task. Protection from flood damage and ensuring the reliability of water supply, conducting reservoir operations and providing environmental stewardship, meeting project schedules and protecting disadvantaged communities, for example, can be difficult and, at times, contradictory goals. Difficult, but not impossible.

“How do Corps projects add value to local projects, and vice versa?” asked Stu Townsley, the flood program manager for the Corps’ South Pacific Division. “What value can someone else’s project provide to mine or to others? What are the linkages? That’s important to know.”



Improvements to Prado Dam outlet works and channel are one of the many projects in the Santa Ana River watershed that have resulted from the coordinated efforts of federal, state and local agencies, along with private organizations and the public. (Photo by Greg Fuderer)

It’s important to know, because the Corps and its partners have learned that, especially in today’s times of national financial limitations, members of Congress are more likely to support projects that benefit multiple constituencies and address shared concerns than they are to approve and fund those that are single-focused and narrow in scope.

For instance, an effort to reclaim sediment from portions of the Santa Ana River may receive more consideration when it has the additional potential for eliminating or reducing adverse impacts to a railroad bridge that transports nearly one-third of the nation’s containerized cargo.

“Water infrastructure projects must serve multiple purposes, and they need to align community needs with national goals,” Townsley said.

How that alignment comes to fruition will be the result of the recently concluded and future watershed-based efforts of the Santa Ana River Mainstem team.

“The Corps’ leadership and creativity resonates today just as it did over year ago when we started this process,” said Celeste Cantu, the general manager for the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority. “As stakeholders, we appreciate working with the Corps to assess the challenges we will collectively face in the 21st century, and we look forward to the next paradigm of how we interact with the Corps and accomplish our mutual goals.”

District commander honored by SAME

David A. Salazar

LOS ANGELES—The commander of the Los Angeles District, Col. Mark Toy, was honored by the Society of American Military Engineers during a luncheon June 11 for the leadership he brought as the post's president during the past three years.

The organization presented him with a plaque thanking him for his service and wished him luck on his next assignment, when he departs the district July 11.

"Col. Toy quickly understood his role as the district commander and fully embraced his role as the president of the SAME LA Post," said Robert Blasberg, the post's first vice president. "It's been a great three years. It's been a pleasure working with you. I can speak for everyone here that we're going miss you. On behalf of all of us at SAME I just want to say thank you and we want

to express our gratitude and appreciation for all you've done for us."

Toy spoke to the crowd of SAME members about his time in command, highlighting the stark contrasts in the district's workload over the years, due to the impacts of fiscal uncertainty as well as significant projects the district has executed.

"The LA River continues to be the center of gravity for the Los Angeles District," Toy said. "My second day on the job as commander, I was the third speaker behind Lisa Jackson, EPA administrator, Mayor Villaraigosa and then me. My sense was that the LA River was going to be very important during the time that I was going to be here. It was really something that struck at the heartstrings of people of California and Los Angeles."

Toy also talked about his strategic initiatives for the district and the genesis of the mantra he adopted of "Build-

ing Strong and Taking Care of People."

"I did an assessment in my first 90 days about what I wanted to do in the district," Toy said. "I looked back on the presentation I gave SAME in October 2010 and I noticed that I had written down 'People, Training, and Facilities' as the areas I was going to focus on."

Toy explained that his wife, May, helped develop the theme and the now-iconic logo depicting the words in a pyramid with the word "people" acting as its foundation.

"I formulated the vision and strategic direction in which I tried to take the district," Toy said. "In my mind-- over my career and the time I've been in the Army, it has always been about the soldier—it has always been about the people."

Toy's next assignment will begin August as chief of staff for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, D.C.



SAME Los Angeles Post first vice president Robert Blasberg, presents Col. Mark Toy with a distinguished service award plaque during a ceremony in Los Angeles June 11. (Photo by David A. Salazar)

Corps collaborates with partners on teacher training to help promote STEM in local schools

Kristen Skopeck

LOS ANGELES — Teachers from among 20 schools in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles gathered the week of June 24 to learn techniques for incorporating hands-on activities related to science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, in their classrooms.

The annual effort is the result of close collaboration between Great Minds in STEM™ and the Center for Engineering and Technology Education at California State University Los Angeles. This year, the Los Angeles District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR), and Heal the Bay joined the effort, as they all advocate keeping America technologically strong through the delivery of STEM awareness programs.

According to Lupe Munoz-Alvarado, director of education programs for Great Minds in STEM™, there are a number of objectives during the weeklong workshop for the K-12 grade teachers, with the ultimate purpose of building greater awareness and capacity in STEM education and providing tools to integrate STEM into lesson plans for the 2013-2014 academic year.

District STEM Coordinator Jennie Ayala commented on the importance of providing STEM curriculum training for teachers, as teachers may not be aware that STEM activities can be worked into nearly every subject and at every level. She also stressed how beneficial it is for organizations with similar goals to join together for a common purpose, as resources go further.

"The Corps is fortunate to be a part of this effort and partnering with these organizations, because their educational program managers are truly dedicated to demonstrating how STEM activities can be fun, while enlightening about local issues," Ayala said. "For example, taking the teachers to the Los Angeles River, when a few of the teachers didn't even realize it was an actual river, was eye opening for everyone."



Teachers from among 20 schools in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles gathered the week of June 24 to learn techniques for incorporating hands-on activities related to science, technology, engineering, and math. In this photo they are learning about how water flows within a watershed. (Photo by Kristen Skopeck)

Ayala said when teachers step away from the classroom and become students again they tend to regain an appreciation for how STEM-centered activities positively influence students.

FOLAR's Director of Education Programming Shelly Backlar told the teachers how the organization is building a 38-foot vehicle called L.A. River Rover, which will help bring the river to area students. She said it will teach about the past, present and future of the river, as well as contain an aquarium and other hands-on features.

Backlar led the teachers in several activities designed to enhance the understanding of watersheds and how people impact how water flows on the surface of the planet. She shared instructor duties with Edward Murphy, education program manager for Heal the Bay.

Murphy explained several ways Heal the Bay works to inspire people to appreciate and conserve the ocean through education about the local marine environment. The organization has an aquarium at Santa Monica Pier, a speakers bureau, and conducts commu-

nity cleanups.

"I also teach a high school field science program called 'Creek 101,'" Murphy said. "Students learn how to apply scientific skills towards exploring their local creeks and waterways and can evaluate the health of their community."

Ayala mentioned that the Corps works directly with Great Minds in STEM™ to sponsor a national STEM awareness program that seeks to foster an increased awareness and interest in science, technology, engineering and math among underrepresented inner-city students in grades K-12. The initiative is funded through the Department of Defense's STEM School Support Initiative Program, a five-year pilot program that aims to bring about an increase in the underrepresented minority presence in the nation's college-level STEM programs.

"All of our organizations care about the environment and promoting STEM," Ayala said. "We believe that if teachers internalize and incorporate STEM activities in their classrooms, it will translate into future benefits for all of us."

Los Angeles District facilitates expansion of key Orange County recruiting center

David A. Salazar

MISSION VIEJO, Calif. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers participated in the grand opening of the U.S. Army's newest career center in Mission Viejo, Calif., during a ceremony in conjunction with the U.S. Army's 238th birthday, June 14.

The Los Angeles District manages more than 250 recruiting station leases throughout Southern California, Arizona and Nevada, as part of the Department of Defense Recruiting Facilities Program.

The leases are valued at more than \$30 million and cover nearly 650,000 square feet of space, roughly three-fourths the size of the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The Army's recruiting office accounts for half of the total area of the still-under-construction 6,350-square-foot joint service recruiting center in Mission Viejo, Calif. The other half of the facility will be occupied by Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force recruiters. The center required months of coordination between the Southern California Recruiting Battalion and the Los Angeles District, which facilitated the real estate contracting and build out of the new office.

"It took many months of planning and coordination in order to bring this facility to fruition. The result is this beautiful state-of-the-art center," said Army Maj. Emily Norton, commander of the Newport Beach Recruiting Company, which oversees recruiting operations in south Orange County.

The new facility also saved more than \$600,000 in lease and construction costs to the government over the course of the five-year lease, said Thomas Gulihur, a supervisory realty specialist in the district's Asset Management Division. "The current rental rate was reduced significantly and major tenant improvement construction was performed at great savings," Gulihur said.

The new office consolidates three different recruiting centers' worth of



Army Maj. Emily Norton (center) addresses a crowd of Army supporters, future soldiers, and members of the community, during the grand opening of the Army Career Center in Mission Viejo, Calif., June 14. (Photo by David A. Salazar)

recruiting personnel under the Army's team recruiting concept, which calls for soldiers to support a unit recruiting mission instead of individual recruiting quotas and cuts costs.

"The significance of this new concept is that it reduces the number of offices recruiters need to meet daily business and allows our soldiers to conduct more efficient and effective recruiting operations," Norton said. "This transformation aligns with the Department of Defense's plan to reduce government spending and cut costs. When the transition is complete, the number of recruiting stations in southern Orange County will decrease from six to two and as the process continues, the number of total stations across the battalion will decrease from 45 to 22."

Although the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and the Southern California

Recruiting Battalion have been operating under the concept since 2012, the new facility allows recruiters to more effectively pursue their goals under the tenets of small unit recruiting. In the previous office, soldiers had to share work stations, making the accomplishments of day-to-day tasks more challenging than usual.

"The new center gives everyone a work station that they could work out of, because before in the other station, we were doubling up on desks," said Sgt. 1st Class Mark Weems, the commander of the Army's Mission Viejo Recruiting Center. "As far as command and control, I'm able to see everything that's going on in the station, and when people walk in the door, it will look professional, the soldiers will be professional, and potential recruits will want to become part of this organization."

OPM issues memo on DOMA ruling, benefits

Liza Rosa

In response to the recent Supreme Court ruling declaring the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued the attached memo dated June 28 regarding the extension of benefits to legally married gay and lesbian federal employees and their families.

The memorandum is as follows:

The recent Supreme Court ruling declaring the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional means that legally married same-sex spouses of federal employees and their families are now considered eligible family members under various benefits programs as described below. Employees who were legally married prior to June 26 will have until August 26, 2013 to enroll their newly eligible family members. Employees who are legally married on or after June 26, will have 60 days from the date of marriage to make the changes. Employees who do not make their enrollment during the 60-day election window will be eligible to enroll during the annual open enrollment period.

Health Insurance (FEHB)-Legally married same-sex spouses will now be eligible family members for self and family FEHB enrollment. In addition, children of the same-sex marriages will be treated just as those of opposite-sex marriages to include eligibility for the children of the same-sex spouse as stepchildren of the employee. Enrollment effective dates are as follows: FEHB election and changes: first day of the pay period following the election; FEHB cancellations: end of the pay period in which election is made.

Life Insurance (FEGLI)-Legally married same-sex spouses and children of legal same-sex marriages are now eligible family members under the FEGLI program for coverage under OPTION C. Enrollment effective dates for FEGLI OPTION C election: first day in pay status following the date of election.

Automated systems are being updated to allow for inputting same-sex spouse information directly into the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS).

Until these updates have been completed, eligible employees who wish to make a change to their FEHB and/or FEGLI must call the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) at 877-276-9287 and speak to a counselor who will process the transaction for the employee. Employees already enrolled in family coverage and who wish to add additional, newly eligible family members should call their FEHB carrier (at the number on their ID card) to add the additional family members to their existing family policy.



Dental and Vision Insurance (FEDVIP)-Legally married same-sex spouses will now be eligible family members for Self and Family or Self Plus One dental and/or vision enrollment. More information on FEDVIP can be found on the BENEFEDS website: <https://www.benefeds.com> or by calling 877-888-3337.

Long-Term Care Insurance (FLTCIP)-Legally married same-sex spouses have until August 26 to apply for FLTCIP coverage with abbreviated underwriting. More information on FLTCIP can be found on the LTC Partners website: <http://www.ltcfed.com> or by calling 800-582-3337.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)-Employees who are in legal same-sex marriages will now be able to submit claims for medical expenses for their same-sex spouse and any newly qualifying children. More information on FSAFEDS can be found at <https://www.fsafeds.com> or by calling 877-372-3337.

Retirement-Guidance is still pending on election of survivor annuity for retiring employees in a legal same-sex marriage who wish to elect a survivor annuity for a same-sex spouse. However, these same-sex spouses will be eligible for survivor annuities.

Additional guidance continues to be issued and will be posted on the ABC-C website at <https://www.abc.army.mil> as it becomes available.



— WHEN YOU MAY HAVE ENCOUNTERED A MUNITION.

— DO NOT TOUCH, MOVE OR DISTURB IT,
BUT CAREFULLY LEAVE THE AREA.

— CALL 911!



Beware of motorcyclists and motorcyclists beware

Steve McCombs

Happy Summer District Team-mates!! I want to focus this month's article on Motorcycle Safety. The Southwest provides some of the best riding conditions anywhere in the United States and with gasoline prices so high many more folks are choosing to ride.

I must confess that I have a deep dislike for these machines. Not because they aren't fun - I rode from time to time when I was younger - but because they are inherently dangerous. A motorcycle, unlike an automobile, has essentially zero safety backup features. All you have to keep you safe on your bike are your wits, skill and protective gear. No seatbelts, no airbags, no sturdy material between you and the other vehicle. As a safety officer, I have conducted way too many accident investigations involving these beasts.

Riding motorcycles is kind of like living in earthquake country. Here in California we know we're going to have large, damaging earthquakes. If you ride a motorcycle, you are going to crash and no matter how good your gear is, sometimes it's just not enough.

Evel Knievel (if you don't know who he is, ask an old geezer like me) is quoted as saying, "When I hit that pavement at 70 or 80 mph those suits just ripped." So that's my "Motorcyclists Beware" message. Ride safely. Wear full protective equipment at all times. All these things will help you avoid a crash or at least help protect you when you do end up sliding along the asphalt. The more you mitigate your risk when you ride, the more likely you are to remain alive and in one piece. Take a course that is sponsored by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, even if you're already an experienced rider. It's mandatory if you are on active duty and want to ride. Here's their link.

Now here's the "Beware of Motorcyclists" part.

For the rest of us who drive vehicles with four or more wheels, we have a duty to be very mindful that motorcycle riders are out there with us. It's difficult sometimes, especially on the packed freeways, to see a rider. More often than not, you won't see the motorcycle



Motorcycle safety is a two way street: Both motorcycle riders and car drivers must be aware of the risks each poses to the other. (File photo)

until it is very close to you. All too often this ends in disaster. For a number of reasons, I now drive to work instead of taking the train in from the valley.

Every day I see motorcycle riders lane-splitting (both legally and illegally), and I am frequently surprised when one appears right next to my car and I never saw it coming. Here's a link to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration "Share the Road" campaign. Give it a look-see by clicking here.

Over 4,000 motorcycle fatalities happen every year in these United States. A great deal more folks are seriously injured. The toll in misery, pain, medical care, insurance and lawsuits is staggering. Let's all do what we can, both riders and non-riders, to improve this situation. That's one very good definition of "Taking Care of People" in my view!

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

Fueling your body for optimum performance

Andrea Lindsey, MS
Human Performance Resource Center

What's the best pre-workout supplement to help me improve my performance?

The Human Performance Resource Center has received many questions about what the best pre-workout supplements are for improving physical or athletic performance. The best pre-workout products are simply whole foods.

A balanced diet that includes protein (lean meat, poultry, fish, low fat dairy products and beans), whole grains, and plenty of fruits and vegetables will provide your body the proper ratio of protein, carbohydrates, and fats needed for energy, endurance, and muscle building. Remember, whole foods typically cost less than dietary supplement products too.

If food is not your first choice (think again), then be a smart shopper as many pre-workout products contain one or more stimulants (or ingredients that have stimulant effects) such as bitter orange (citrus aurantium or synephrine), yohimbe, or caffeine in various forms (e.g., caffeine anhydrous, guarana, tea, yerba maté, cocoa, cacao, kola nut, and more.).

The possible side effects of taking stimulants include irritability, difficulty sleeping, addiction, irregular heart rhythms (such as palpitations), convulsions, and heart attack. Some popular pre-workout products claim to provide nitric oxide (a gas), but those products usually contain argin-

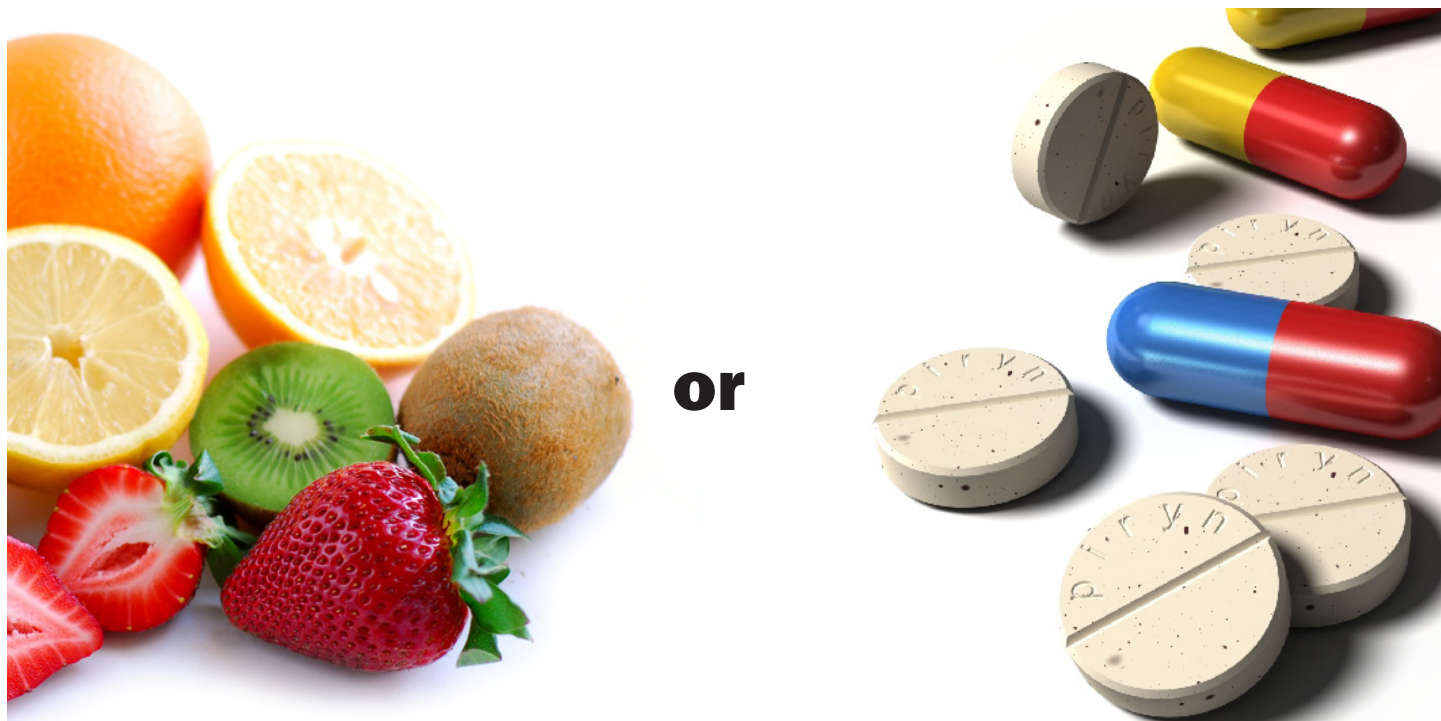
ine, an amino acid with a variety of effects in the body.

Also, many pre-workout products contain "proprietary blends," which make it impossible to determine the exact amount of each ingredient you would be taking. This is especially important in the case of stimulants, such as synephrine and caffeine. Unfortunately, little information is available on how combinations of such ingredients might act in the body, so before taking various multiple ingredient supplements, either alone or in combination, check out the ingredients.

Without laboratory testing, there is no way to know the actual contents of a product, so check to see if it has been evaluated by an independent, third-party organization. For more information and links to organization websites, visit the OPSS FAQ about third-party certification. Also, see the Operation Supplement Safety FAQ on bodybuilding and performance-enhancing products.

The Food and Drug Administration points out that some sports/workout products contain hidden ingredients that can be harmful so read the FDA's "Tainted Products Marketed as Dietary Supplements." Bodybuilding, weight-loss, and sexual-enhancement products are the most common types of supplements they have found to contain undeclared drugs. More information about issues related to each of these types of supplements is available from the FDA.

Remember, the BEST choice to fuel your performance is real food. Easily digestible foods, in addition to adequate fluids, will help you achieve your performance goals.



For optimum results and the best nutrition for your body, always choose whole foods instead of supplements. (File photo)

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SCOTUS' ruling on DOMA affects federal workers

Sonya Trammell-Jones

On Wednesday June 26, 2013 the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act or DOMA, clearing the way for federal employees to share benefits with their same-sex spouses.

The 1996 law defined marriage as between a man and a woman, affecting more than 1,000 laws in which marital status is a factor. Several of those laws govern federal workforce benefits, such as the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan, survivor benefits, and pension programs.

The Office of Personnel Management -- which administers federal employee benefits--has cited DOMA as the reason it cannot offer benefits to same-sex couples.

A statement on the OPM website read: "For those benefits of federal employment that are limited to spouses, DOMA thus prohibits coverage of same-sex domestic partners, even if legally married under state law."

In April, OPM proposed to extend FEHB to domestic partners -- including both opposite- and same-sex couples -- but fell short of including same-sex spouses in its plan. The agency issued a statement on Wednesday asking for "continued patience" of federal employees as they review the Supreme Court's decision.

"In the coming days, OPM will be working closely with the Department of Justice and other agencies to provide additional guidance for federal human resources professionals, benefits officers, and our employees and annuitants," OPM's Acting Director Elaine Kaplan said. "While we recognize that our married gay and lesbian employees have already waited too long for this day, we ask for their continued patience as we take the steps necessary to review the Supreme Court's decision and implement it. As soon as we have updates to share, they will be posted on our website."

Attorney General Eric Holder said the Justice Department will work with other agencies to determine implementation plans, and called the decision "an enormous triumph for equal protection under the law for all Americans."

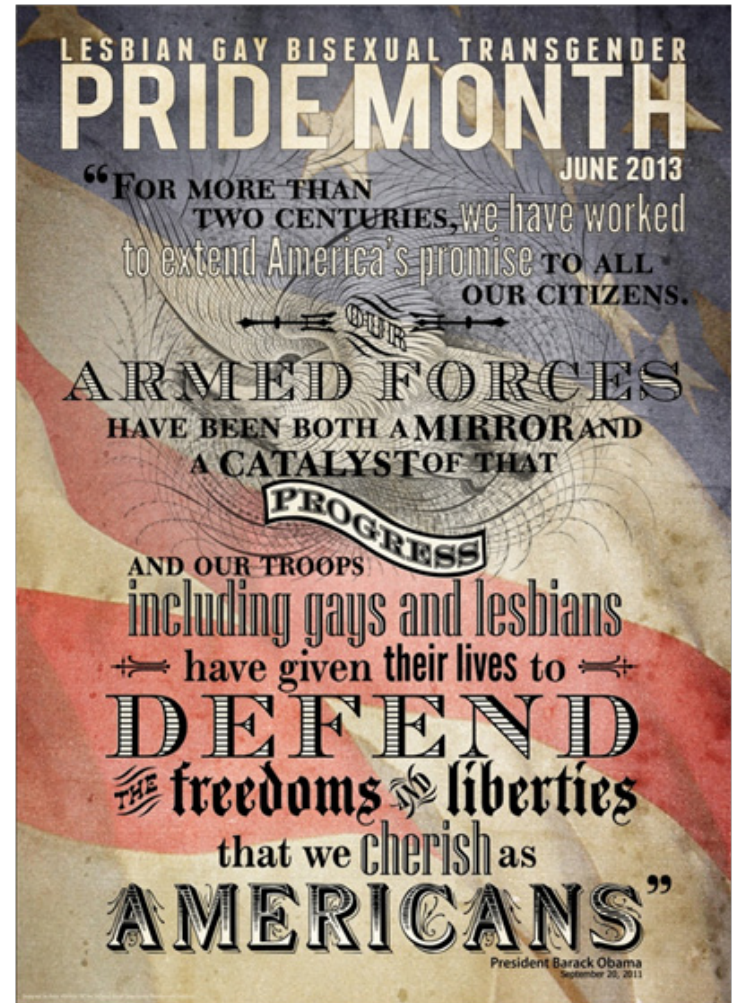
The Obama administration declined to defend DOMA in *United States v. Windsor*, the case on which the Supreme Court ruled Wednesday. Republican leaders in the House hired legal representation to defend it, but the court ruled the law unconstitutional by a 5-4 decision.

"DOMA's history of enactment and its own text demonstrate that interference with the equal dignity of same-sex marriages, conferred by the states in the exercise of their sovereign power, was more than an incidental effect of the federal statute," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the majority opinion. "It was its essence."

He added DOMA had the effect of "writing inequality into the entire U.S. Code."

When hearing oral arguments in March, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said federal benefits "touch every aspect of life."

"Your partner is sick -- I mean, it's pervasive. It's not as though there's this little federal sphere and it's only a tax



question," she said.

The American Federation of Government Employees, AFGE praised the ruling, with National President J. David Cox calling it a "victory of equality over exclusion, of fairness over fear, of compassion over contempt."

The union called on OPM to act quickly in allowing federal employees to share benefits with same-sex spouses.

"Now that the Supreme Court has declared DOMA unconstitutional, we expect the federal government to move swiftly in changing its rules and regulations to ensure that all federal employees are afforded the same rights and benefits, regardless of whom they choose to marry," said Leisha Self, an AFGE legal rights attorney.

Other federal employees groups, such as the National Treasury Employees Union and the National Federation of Federal Employees, also called for the Obama administration to quickly offer guidance on how the ruling will be implemented.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel promised he would get to work "immediately" to determine implementation of the ruling.

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It's time to declare your own independence

Daniel J. Calderón

Unless you're reading this in Australia, it's the fiery center of summer for you, my literate friends. Hopefully, you're not stressing about body image (because we have had that discussion before, remember? And, we'll get into it a little this time, just hang tight) and you've all had time to get out and enjoy the sun. It's time to be independent, both in thought and deed. Remember what was written on that estimable document by those wise men more than 225 years ago:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

How you pursue your happiness is completely up to you. Beware of leaving something that important in the hands of someone else. Be very careful when you allow other people to tell you whether the way you decide to make yourself happy or content is right or wrong.

Short disclaimer here – Had to pause this column for a second to make sure I got something straight. There is a difference between what I will be discussing and what is illegal. I am in no way advocating anything that will hurt anyone else or is in any way against the law. I know the vast majority of readers will understand this without my having to "say" it; but, there are some folks who take enjoyment from twisting words or being advocates of the worst possible scenario. As we go along this month, let's stay off that particular path, shall we? Okay. And away we go!

Happiness is a personal thing. The way we go about being happy is personal and it often varies from day to day. There are some things that we do that will make us happy nearly every time we do it. And there are some things that are for special occasions. But, as long as

you're doing what is legal, taking care of your responsibilities and not hurting anyone, those pursuits should be chased with all the vigor at your command.



Dylan Thomas once wrote, "Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light." I think he meant it as an admonition for people to fight death at their last breath. I see it more as a call to arms for people at all stages of life. None of us is immortal and all of us are moving toward that eventual "good night." As

we do what makes us happy, we rage against the dying of the light. We show just how much we are loving this brief, bright life we are given.

In all things, moderation is key. I don't think being happy is what we can be all the time; but, I don't think we should allow ourselves to be sad all the time either. Just as we can't always be awake or asleep, too much of anything is a bad thing.

If eating is your thing, enjoy it. Get out and find your favorite foods and share them. I really enjoy being in the kitchen and cooking. It's great to cook for my family and fun when we have friends over. There's just something about seeing people enjoy something that I've made with my own hands that's incredibly gratifying. So, if you like to eat and to cook, go out and do it. However, enjoy it in moderation. Make sure that you take care of yourself while enjoying the food you love and add a little bit of exercise. I'm not talking about getting into cross fit five days a week and twice a day each time. In moderation, exercise is a great thing, just like food. If you haven't had chocolate lasagna, by the way, you should get online and get yourself the recipe. I've made it at home twice already and I'm firmly convinced that one of these times I'm going to do such a good job at it that it's going to be a cure for some kind of disease. It's that good.

If sitting out at the lake or the

beach or by your pool with your friends and family is what makes you happy, then go ahead and do it. Don't let anyone tell you that you're too fat, too skinny, too tall, too short or too anything. The perfect body is the one you are in right now. If you want to change it, go ahead; but do it for yourself and for no one else. You are the only one that you have to wake up with every single morning of your life.

But, if you're going to go out in the sun, do it in moderation and do it intelligently. If you feel like going absque vestitu (it's Latin) is fine for you, then go ahead and go. If you're in a place where that's legal and appropriate (like at home in your own backyard. If your neighbors don't like it, then they can close their shades), then I don't see anything wrong with it. When you talk to your other friends and family about it, they might look at you like you're crazy or some kind of deviant; but, don't let that deter you. It's alright for them to disagree with you; but, it's also alright for you to feel comfortable in your own skin.

I feel kind of bad for folks who don't feel that way. I think those folks have bought into the idea that the body is somehow inherently a bad thing or that being comfortable is automatically the same thing as being immoral or that sex and being absque vestitu (just in case some people can't handle the word nude) are automatically linked. There are worlds of difference and the body is not a bad thing. I've had mine for quite a while and I have to say that, although it isn't the sturdiest thing around and it doesn't get nearly the same kinds of looks today that I might have gotten ten years ago, I'm still just fine with it. Don't let anyone tell you that your own body is anything less than right for you.

If you choose to change it with diet or exercise, do it for yourself and not to conform to anyone else's ideas of what looks good. If you're going to change, make sure it's for your own health, comfort or happiness. No one else can enjoy your company if you can't. Understand that you are whole and complete within

— see FINAL WORD, Page 16 —

District completes Nellis AFB simulator



Brig. Gen. Charles Moore, 57th Wing commander; Pete Puppato, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers resident engineer; Ray Haj, Swinerton Builders Government Division vice president; Michael Zettler, F-35 Sustainment at Lockheed Martin vice president; Randy Black, United States Air Force Warfare Center honorary commander; and Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Lofgren, USAFWC commander, cut the ribbon at the new F-35 simulator facility during a ribbon cutting ceremony May 23, 2013, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The F-35 simulator facility was built to provide realistic training that is independent of the weather, maintenance, and range availability that can challenge daily operations. The Las Vegas Resident Office at Nellis Air Force Base managed construction of the facility. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Brett Clashman)

— FINAL WORD from Page 15 —

yourself and it really won't matter what others say or feel about you. That doesn't mean that jerks and their jibes won't hurt. It just means that if you are comfortable with yourself, those little hurts won't be permanent. They'll fade just like the fools who made them. Make your happiness your own.

I understand compromises have to be made. None of us live in a vacuum or a bubble in which our actions have no consequences. All of us have to deal with people on a daily basis. However, deciding to give up your own pursuit of happiness in favor of appealing to what others think is right will most likely lead to a sense that you have lost something. Time is probably what you are going to miss most. All of us have only a limited number of days allotted to us in this world. What we choose to do with that time is totally up to us.

Happiness isn't all just one thing. It can be if you'd like; but, it doesn't have to be that way. My happiness is multifac-

eted. My kids are my happiness. My wife is also my happiness. The activities I enjoy after work are also my happiness. Reading makes me happy and so does writing. Not all things that I enjoy are the same as what my family back home or friends enjoy. It's alright, though. It's my pursuit of happiness and I know I am not harming anyone as I pursue it. Will you choose to rage against the dying of your light?

"Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night."

I know my end will come someday; but, I will fight it with everything I have. I will enjoy this life while I still have breath with which to do it and I challenge you to do the same. What makes you happy? What looks like it might be fun? What adventures have you always wanted to try? July 4 is our Independence Day. Find your own independence. Pursue your happiness. If you don't, you'll never know if you can catch it or not. Just a thought...

— DOMA from Page 14 —

"The Department of Defense welcomes the Supreme Court's decision today on the Defense of Marriage Act," Hagel said in a statement. "The department will immediately begin the process of implementing the Supreme Court's decision in consultation with

the Department of Justice and other executive branch agencies. The Department of Defense intends to make the same benefits available to all military spouses -- regardless of sexual orientation -- as soon as possible. That is now the law and it is the right thing to do."

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey said at

a press conference Wednesday that despite its reputation, the military has always "done a credible job of providing as much equality as the law allows."

The Williams Institute, a think tank dedicated to issues of sexual orientation, has estimated there are 200,000 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees in the federal workforce.

District kicks off new awards program, observes Army, Corps birthdays

David Salazar

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles District launched its newly-enacted employee recognition program in conjunction with a ceremony marking the Army's and the Corps of Engineers' 238th birthday at the district headquarters in downtown Los Angeles June 25.

Although recognizing employees for their accomplishments is not a new occurrence for the district, the ceremony marked the expansion of the organization's local awards program, championed by the district commander and his long standing initiative to focus on people, training, and facilities.

Army Col. Mark Toy, the district commander, presented awards to more than 120 employees, including length of service awards, certificates of achievement and appreciation, and numerous awards for individual accomplishment.

Toy also presented awards to the inaugural recipients of the newly developed peer- and management-nominated local awards including Outstanding Project Delivery Team Member, Helping Hand for Others, which recognizes one employee who exemplifies volunteerism and assistance to others; the Rising Star Award, which recognizes outstanding employees who have been with the district for less than three years; and the Pillar Award, which recognizes professionals in the administrative, secretarial, and clerical support fields.

"You all are what truly make our organization great. What we're about to do here is really what makes me tick as an individual," Toy said to district employees in the filled conference room. "We're here to present awards to deserving individuals in our district who have made our district great."

The afternoon ceremony ended with a retirement ceremony for four employees who each served more than three decades. Liddie Bay, an administrative assistant with the district's engineering division, and Victor Renteria, a dam operator at Whittier Narrows and Fullerton flood control basins, each



The district commander, Col. Mark Toy, presents a commander's award for civilian service medal to Sandra Wheeler, the former administrative assistant for the district's engineering branch, to mark her retirement from the federal service after 32 years. The ceremony was part of a larger presentation of numerous awards, including six new awards that recognize the hard work of the district's employees. (Photo by Richard Rivera)

retired after 39 years of service. Sandra Wheeler, an administrative assistant with the district's planning division, retired after 32 years of service, and Mark Weintraub, the deputy chief of the district's office of counsel retired

after 29 years of service.

"You all are the true heroes of this organization. We can never say thank you enough for all the great things you do," Toy said. "This is all a part of building strong and taking care of people."

Around the District professional pride

Liddie Bay, an administrative assistant for the district's planning division, was honored for her 39 years of service in a ceremony marking her retirement June 25. (Photo by Richard Rivera)



Sandra Wheeler, an administrative assistant for the district's engineering division, was honored for her 32 years of service in a ceremony marking her retirement June 25. (Photo by Richard Rivera)



Kevin Inada Employee of the Quarter

Deborah Leighton was selected as the employee of the quarter for her exceptional support of district employees as workforce manager. She demonstrated true dedication to ensuring employees made a smooth transition into and out of the district, as well as numerous other acts that went above and beyond! Thanks, Deb, for all you continually do!



Victor Renteria, a dam operator at Prado and Fullerton Flood Control Basins, was honored for his 39 years of service in a ceremony marking his retirement June 25. (Photo by Richard Rivera)



Mark Weintraub, the deputy district counsel, was honored for his 29 years of service in a ceremony marking his retirement June 25. (Photo by Richard Rivera)

BUILDING STRONG® *and Taking Care of People!*