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COMMANDER IN CHIEF'S



INSTALLATION
EXCELLENCE AWARD
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Naval Support Activity Panama City

The Coastal Courier
Naval Support Activity
Panama City

Public Affairs Office
101 Vernon Drive
Panama City, Fla.
32407-7018

Cmdr. Christopher C. Serow
NSA PC Commanding Officer

Steven Applegate
NSA PC Public Affairs Officer
(850) 230-7717

Mass Communication Specialist
2nd Class (SW/AW) Kevin Gray
Contributing Editor/
Layout & Design
(850) 234-4803

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Tuition Assistance Program funds awaiting Sailors' use

By: Susan D. Henson, Center for Personal and Professional Development Public Affairs

The Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) is asking Sailors to submit their Navy Tuition Assistance (TA) requests – and now would be good -- said the director of Navy Voluntary Education (VOLED) March 3.

According to Ernest D'Antonio, CPPD's VOLED program director, the expenditure rate for TA funding is currently below normal levels, which means there's more funding available than usual at this time of the year. "We

use historical 'burn rates' as a guide for allocating TA funding throughout the year," he said. "We plan really well for routine years. After furloughs and a government shutdown, Fiscal Year 2014 (FY-14) hasn't been a routine year," he said.

Lt. Cmdr. Mark Wadsworth, director of CPPD Support Site Saufley Field in Pensacola, Fla., leads the team that monitors CPPD's Navy TA spending. He said FY-14 TA execution

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Gil Williams, director of the Navy College Site, reviews college degree requirements with Airman Marti Gardea, from Delano, Calif., assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), at the Navy College. Gardea is one of many Ronald Reagan Sailors taking advantage of the Navy College Program. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nicholas A. Groesch/Released)

NSA Panama City Chain of Command



**Commanding Officer
Cmdr. Christopher Serow**



**Executive Officer
Lt. Bobby Kenning**



**Command Master Chief
Petty Officer Hector Sandoval**

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is currently trailing FY-13's execution rate by just over \$6 million year-to-date.

"We think a variety of things influenced our being below the TA budget right now. Our execution rate dropped in October with the government shutdown and that's carried through the year," he said. "The usage rate steadily increased in November and December. But then it dropped back down in January, probably due to uncertainty with the federal budget. Although we have funding now, the usage rate hasn't increased significantly since then. Sailors need to understand that their education benefits reset each year, and unused amounts don't carry over."

D'Antonio said, "We want Sailors to continue to pursue their education and submit their TA requests – we work hard to allocate every TA dollar available to give Sailors the most opportunities to use their TA funding allotment for each fiscal year."

He said more than 25,000 Sailors have used TA benefits so far this fiscal year and emphasized that a Sailor's command is an important part of TA authorizations because they're the first step in the process after a Sailor submits a request. "It's each command's responsibility to ensure their Sailors are aware of and meet all relevant TA policies, are comfortable with their Sailors' ability to complete a requested course, and process each Sailor's TA request promptly," he said.

"A command approver can review a Sailor's request and deny it if all Navy requirements aren't met, if the Sailor's performance isn't up to standards, or if the command's mission might not permit the Sailor to complete the course. Ultimately, it's the commanding officer's decision," said D'Antonio. He

also recommended each command approver continually review the Sailor's education progress.

"Our biggest reason for disapproval of TA requests is they aren't received from the Sailor's command approver prior to the course start date, as required by DOD instruction. Often when we review a TA request, a Sailor may be missing some of the TA prerequisites such as a current education counseling by a Navy College Office (NCO) or Virtual Education Center (VEC) counselor, or an individual education plan or degree plan on file, or missing a grade from a past course," he said.

VOLED professionals work with Sailors to get the requirements in on time, but if the Sailor's account is incomplete or not updated before the course start date, they are unable to fund the TA request, D'Antonio said. "So I repeat this message constantly: 30 days prior to the course start date is not too soon for Sailors to submit their TA request. In fact, a TA application can be submitted a year before the actual class start date, which will help ensure the Sailor's TA request is funded and allows us to better manage expenditures."

D'Antonio also stressed that Sailors should work closely with an NCO or VEC counselor to help them reach their educational goals. "The VOLED team is here to help, bottom line. Our job is to work with Sailors, inform them about options, provide impartial counseling and point out avenues for Sailors to pursue their life-long educational and credentialing goals."

According to CPPD Commanding Officer Capt. John Newcomer, Navy leaders are committed to providing Sailors with voluntary education

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opportunities. “We know that educated Sailors are strong performers with well-developed critical thinking skills and the ability to make informed decisions. A college degree is an investment in a Sailor and a contributing factor in Navy mission accomplishment.”

For more information about the Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD), visit: <https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/cppd/>.

For more news from the Center for Personal and Professional Development, visit: www.navy.mil/local/voledpao/.

Find CPPD on Facebook at [https://](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Center-for-Personal-and-Professional-Development/100056459206)

www.facebook.com/pages/Center-for-Personal-and-Professional-Development/100056459206 and on Twitter @CENPERSPROFDEV.

CPPD: Where Mind Meets Mission

Detailers Given Authority to Alter Transfer Dates

From: From Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

In order for critical fleet vacancies to be filled on time, detailers can now write orders directing the detachment or transfer of enlisted Sailors up to six months prior to their projected rotation date or as late as six months after their PRD.

“This change gives the detailers increased authority and flexibility to reduce gaps in fleet requirements,” said Fleet Master Chief April Beldo, fleet master chief for manpower, personnel, training and education. “We’re working to improve enlisted fleet manning and reduce gaps at sea, but there are times when fleet vacancies and associated training requirements do not align well with availability dates. This change is about opening up the detailing window so we can ensure on-time arrival of the right Sailor with the right training to fleet commands.”

Beldo said the process enlisted Sailors use for selecting orders will not change.

“This won’t bring any significant process changes for Sailors,” said Beldo. “You will still enter your normal nine-month PRD window and negotiate orders through CMS/ID. If you are being considered for early return to sea (ERS), your detailer will let you know. If you are selected for an ERS requirement your orders may direct you to transfer earlier, or later, than your PRD.”

Here are four things you need to



know about the changes:

1. Enlisted detailers will fill as many high priority E4 - E9 sea duty requirements as possible by fully using the authorized transfer window of “-6/+6.” Involuntary curtailment of shore duty at 24 months will only be used when there are limited Sailors available in the PRD window and there are no excess personnel on sea duty within the geographic area that can be reassigned.

2. PRDs will not be adjusted and the current CMS/ID application and selection policies will remain unchanged. Sailors will continue to enter their CMS/ID order negotiation window nine months prior to their PRD. However, when they are selected for their next assignment their orders may direct their transfer earlier than

the previous “-3/+4” PRD transfer window allowed.

3. Actual transfer dates will be determined by the commencement of training for the prospective job and the date of the anticipated fleet vacancy they’re ordered to fill. This change to the PCS transfer timeframe is driven by the need to ensure on-time arrival of the right sailor, with the right training to fleet commands.

4. Nuclear enlisted sailors will have their initial sea tour PRDs set in accordance with their prescribed sea tour lengths. This change removes unnecessary administration from the ships; allows for more accurate personnel inventory reports; and provides Sailors with more accurate PRDs upon receipt of orders to their initial CVN sea tour.

Photos From Around the Activity



(Left) Lt. Gen. Bradley Heithold, U.S. Air Force, Vice Commander, Headquarters U.S. Special Operations Command, Washington, D.C., presents Staff Sgt. Thomas Culpepper, U.S Air Force, with the Distinguished Flying Cross (with Valor) at the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC). Culpepper was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (with Valor) for heroism while participating in aerial flight during operations in Kandahar, Afghanistan, May 26, 2011 and is currently an instructor at NDSTC. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kevin B. Gray



(Above) Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Vice Commander Rear Adm. Tom Kearney, USN, climbs down the Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC 91) ladder as he exits the expeditionary hovercraft Tuesday, March 11, 2014. Photo by Jacqui Barker, NSWC PCD Corporate Communications.



Navy Diver 1st Class Alvin Carter enters the water from the Poseidon (YDT-18) yard diving tender during a surface supplied dive supervisor training evolution with Navy Dive and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC). NDSTC is the largest diving facility in the world, training more than 1200 students a year from all services. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kevin B. Gray



Lt. Cdr. Kendall Chapman, Public Works Officer, and Mike Clayton, NSA PC Environmental Manager, lead the environmental team in an effort to plant a tree in observance of Arbor Day. Photo by MC2 Kevin B. Gray

NSWC PCD Team Improves Marine Corps Earthmover

By: By Dan Broadstreet, NSWC PCD Public Affairs

The Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Panama City and Marine Corps Systems Command Combat Support Systems (MCSC CSS) fielded the first four modernized M9 Armored Combat Earthmover (ACE) production units at Camp Lejeune, N.C., NAVSEA announced Mar.13.

The M9 ACE is a fully tracked armored combat engineer vehicle, manned by a single equipment operator that provides combat engineering support to front-line U.S. Marine forces.

“When the Marines penetrate areas that appear impassible, it is the mission of the M9 ACE operator to clear all obstacles, reconstruct terrain, breach berms, prepare anti-tank ditches, prepare access routes at water obstacles and create roads, so our forces can breach these areas to complete their missions,” said Jeff Dinges, NSWC PCD M9 ACE project engineer.

The Marines, who depend on it to breach obstacles and clear the way for their troops, claim it is now capable of functioning more efficiently than ever before.

The NSWC Panama City engineering team’s objective was to increase the M9’s reliability, availability and maintainability and is the first major upgrade to the M9 ACE since 1993.

The vehicle’s modernized improvements include an entire redesign of the hydraulic subsystem, incorporation of an automated track tensioning system, a redesign of the electrical subsystem, design and integration of a vision system consisting of ten cameras, the addition of an automated fire extinguishing system, and incorporating improvements from the Army’s Standard Improvement Package-4.



Eighth Engineer Support Battalion’s Marine Sergeant Anthony Queisser (right) discusses the M9 Armored Combat Earthmover’s (ACE) automatic track tension system with Heavy Equipment Platoon Commander Chief Warrant Officer Brad Pottorff at Aberdeen Test Center, Aberdeen, Md. The M9 ACE pictured above is one of the six low rate initial production vehicles used in testing by the Marines. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army).

“The M9 ACE breaches obstacles often constructed by our adversaries. Now that it’s been modernized, there is less of a delay for troop movement by having an ACE out in front,” said 8th Engineer Support Battalion’s Marine Sgt. Anthony Queisser. “And when you’re under enemy fire, every second counts.”

Queisser said the modernization has made a marked difference in the vehicle’s overall performance and responsiveness.

“The integrated vision system adds a whole new level of improved visibility,” said Queisser. “Now there are cameras and lights that surround the ACE and the infrared cameras allow us to see through clouds of dirt and dust, including the ability to see at night. The newer cameras link to screens inside the operator’s cab for enhanced visibility, which brings our visibility factor from about 180 degrees, with the hatch closed, to approximately 360 degrees.”

A total of 101 Modernized M9 ACE’s are planned for delivery to the

U.S. Marine Corps by the end of Fiscal Year 2015, with contributions from NSWC PCD, the USMC program office in Quantico, Va., the USMC Production Plant in Albany, Ga., the Aberdeen Test Center in Aberdeen, Md., and vendors from all over the country.

NSWC Panama City is a field activity of the Naval Sea Systems Command. As the technical center of excellence for littoral warfare and coastal defense, the command is responsible for research, development, test and evaluation, in-service support of mine warfare systems, mines, naval special warfare systems, diving and life support systems, amphibious, expeditionary maneuver warfare systems and other systems that operate primarily in coastal regions.

Navy, Community Collaborate to Create New Artificial Reef

By: Jacqui Barker, NSWC PCD Office of Corporate Communications



Travis Johnson (left) and Ron Barnes (right), both Naval Support Activity Panama City (NSA PC) Public Works Department (PWD) employees, remove a safety block prior to offloading concrete pilings at sea Jan. 30, 2014. U.S Navy photo by Ron Newsome, NSWC PCD.

Despite unseasonably frigid temperatures, U.S. Navy and Bay County personnel placed the last of 144 tons of concrete piling and created a new artificial reef off the coast of Panama City Beach, Fla.

The new artificial reef was built with materials of opportunity which happen to be one of two types of materials preferred for artificial reef construction, according to Bay County Planning and Zoning Artificial Reef Coordinator Allen Golden. The materials were owned by Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City Division (NSWC PCD).

“Concrete and steel are preferred for artificial reef construction and therefore will provide a long term habitat and shelter for marine life,” said Golden. “It’s not solid waste. Many people may think we use the Gulf to dispose of unwanted material, but that is not what we do.”

The concrete was initially planned to go to the landfill, however, NSWC PCD facilities and environmental

personnel reached out to NSA PC, Bay County and Naval Facilities Command (NAVFAC) Public Works Department (PWD) personnel with a better option. According to NSWC PCD Facilities Branch Head Jason Zimmerman, the choice to put the concrete pilings to good use was a logical investment.

“NSWC PCD chose to invest in an additional expenditure creating the artificial reef for two reasons - to divert 143.9 tons of solid waste from a landfill, and to use that material for the creation of an artificial reef,” said Zimmerman. “This reef will promote marine life and benefit Bay County residents and the tourism industry in the panhandle of Florida.”

To send the 143.9 tons of concrete to the Bay County landfill via dump truck would’ve cost the U.S. Navy \$36,290, but to use the material to build an artificial reef that would support new ecosystems in the Gulf of Mexico waters, south of Panama City Beach, Fla., costs \$53,500.

“We chose to enhance the environment through the creation of

an artificial reef rather than to dispose of the concrete pilings in a landfill. The extra expenditure in this project was a worthy investment, providing a win-win-win for all involved,” said Zimmerman. “The Navy needed to dispose of excess research materials; the Navy progressed toward its requirement to divert waste from landfills; and Bay County residents gained a new recreational fishing area.”

“NSWC PCD was key in providing the material and the means to get the material to the site,” said Naval Facilities Command (NAVFAC) Public Works Department (PWD) Community Planner John Skaggs. “The coordination among NSA PC Operations Coordinator Jeff Willows, Allen Golden, and NSWC PCD’s Environmental Carmen Ferrer and Cara Johnson is what propelled this project from an inside the fence line project to a beneficial-to-Bay-County-resident’s project.”

Planning for the artificial reef took approximately 60 days. The approval of the artificial reef permit was signed by Golden Jan. 17, 2014.

“The great relationship between the Navy base and Bay County made this reef project possible without jumping through multiple hoops,” said Skaggs. “In the end, not only do we work at Naval Support Activity Panama City, but we also live and play in Bay County as well.”

Golden prescribed the coordinates of the site location and gave them to Navy base personnel.

“We diverted this solid waste from the landfill and are using it where it will have environmental benefits,” said Carmen Ferrer, Environmental Branch Head (Code B24).

Flagpole Maintenance

Photos by: Steve Applegate, NSA PC Public Affairs



(Left and Above) Mike Frantz, general maintenance contractor with GCR, replaces pulleys and latches on the flagpole in front of NSA PC Administration Bldg. 308 on February 18. Marty Ross, also a GCR employee standing safety watch below, said the most important elements of working aloft in a bucket truck are proper training and wearing appropriate fall-protection equipment.

Adoptions Challenging for Military Families

By: LT Doug Ottenwess, JAGC, USN

Adoption can be a very exciting process for many military families. This life altering process, though, is also one that can be very challenging, costly, and time consuming for many military families. Fortunately, installation Region Legal Service Offices and the Department of Defense offer a wide range of legal advice and cost saving measures that can make the process much easier for our service men and women.

For most military members seeking assistance with adoptions, the most common type is the stepparent adoption, in which one spouse legally adopts the child of the other spouse from a previous relationship. To complete a stepparent adoption, a court must terminate the parental rights of the other biological parent. In cases where the adoption is not contested, the biological parent may voluntarily waive his or her parental rights. Sometimes, however, there are situations in which the whereabouts of the other parent may not be known, or perhaps that parent is not willing to voluntarily relinquish his or her parental rights. In these circumstances, there are very specific, and sometimes lengthy, steps which may need to be taken in order to terminate the parental rights of the other parent. Please consult a local RLSO Legal Assistance office regarding any questions on terminating parental rights.

One big burden for many military families seeking to complete an adoption is cost. Between court costs, attorney fees, and other incidental expenses, the financial burden of completing an adoption can be overwhelming. Most states require that individuals seeking adoptions have an attorney to represent them. To help alleviate many of these costs, the Department

of Defense offers an adoption reimbursement program that provides up to \$2,000 of expenses per child, not to exceed \$5,000 per year. More information about this program can be found on the DFAS website or in DoD Instruction 1341.9. It is important to note that reimbursement will not occur until the adoption process is complete. Local RLSO Legal Assistance offices can provide guidance in preparing the reimbursement paperwork. Additionally, while RLSO Legal Assistance attorneys cannot represent military members and their families in adoption cases, RLSO Legal Assistance offices have resources available to interested families that can put them in touch with local family law attorneys, many of whom offer discounts to military families.

For individuals considering adoption, it is very important to have a complete understanding as to what obligations attach once the adoption is final. RLSO Legal Assistance attorneys can answer questions regarding parental rights and responsibilities that prospective adoptive parents will have once the process is complete. It is highly encouraged to sit down with an attorney and go over these questions before commencing the adoption process. To discuss any of the above listed adoption issues, Please visit us at http://www.jag.navy.mil/legal_services/rlo/rlo_southeast.htm for more information or to find out the location of the legal assistance office closest to you.

TRICARE Offers Nurse Advice Line

By: The Defense Health Agency

Sometimes it is difficult to know if and when to seek medical help for acute health problems, so having professional help at a moment's notice is invaluable. The Military Health System's (MHS) new Nurse Advice Line (NAL) for TRICARE beneficiaries does just that.

TRICARE beneficiaries enrolled at Naval Hospital Pensacola and its 10 Naval Branch Health Clinics, including NBHC Panama City, will be able to call the NAL toll-free 24 hours a day, seven days a week starting March 28. TRICARE beneficiaries in the continental United States, Alaska and Hawaii will be able to begin using the NAL in late April.

The NAL is a team of registered nurses who are available to answer a variety of urgent healthcare questions. They can help you decide whether self-care is the best option, or if it is better to see a healthcare provider. There will always be a live-person on the line to address beneficiary concerns.

The NAL offers a variety of solutions for all TRICARE beneficiaries. For pediatric issues, the NAL will route the beneficiary to a pediatric nurse. If follow-up is necessary or requested, the NAL will call the beneficiary back to check the child's status a few hours later. The NAL will make same-day appointments with the beneficiary's primary

care manager (PCM) for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries who are enrolled to Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). If a same day appointment is not available, the NAL will re-direct the beneficiary to the closest urgent care center, and advise the PCM that an urgent care referral is needed so the patient does not have to worry about paying any point of service co-pays. All other TRICARE beneficiaries who are not enrolled to a MTF will receive professional health advice about their urgent health concern and when to seek urgent care.

When calling the NAL, a customer service representative will verify the beneficiary's eligibility through the Defense Enrollment and Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Beneficiaries with an acute health care concern or question will be connected with a registered nurse that will ask the beneficiary a series of very standard questions to determine the next steps and allow the NAL nurse to provide the best advice possible.

Beneficiaries are still encouraged to contact their Medical Home Port Team or PCM, but the NAL is another option for beneficiaries to access the care they need and want in a timely fashion. To access the NAL, once it launches, dial 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273); Option 1.

NSWC PCD Celebrates Women's History

By: Jacqui Barker, NSWC PCD Corporate Communications



NSWC PCD's Federal Women's Program Manager Zena Le (left) and NSWC PCD Commanding Officer Capt. Phillip Dawson III present an appreciation plaque to Ms. Ann P. Garner, acting Director, Installations and Mission Support for Headquarters, First Air Force at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

servicing with courage, and rising above stereotypes.

Ann Garner, keynote speaker, 2014 Women's History Month celebration titled "Women of Character, Courage and Commitment," engaged event attendees with humor and real-world examples of women who've displayed courage recently to overcome stereotypes and achieve greatness. Her presentation was titled, "Sticks and Stones." The event was hosted by the Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City Division's (NSWC PCD) Diversity Council Wednesday, March 19, 2014 in Panama City, Fla.

Garner is the acting Director, Installations and Mission Support for Headquarters, First Air Force at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. Garner serves as the primary advisor to the Commander, Air Forces Northern

for installations, mission support, civil engineering, contracting, security forces, and cross-functional expeditionary combat support.

"Today we are celebrating this inclusive event because we want everyone to believe their voice matters," said NSWC PCD Commanding Officer, Capt. Phillip Dawson III, USN.

Zena Le, NSWC PCD's Federal Women's Program Manager introduced not only Garner, but also other women of character, courage and commitment like NSWC PCD's first technical high grade Susan Nelson and the command's former Federal Women's Program Manager and Public Information Officer Katherine "Kitty" Clark. These women were applauded for their significant contributions in federal civil service.

The room was filled with women of character and courage who have committed themselves to a goal, but it was the guest speaker who embodied the 2014 Women's History Month theme as she spoke about overcoming perceptions,