Toys For Tots holiday hero

Holiday de-stressing

Special Government Employee
On The Cover:

Cover photo by: Jack Adamyk

Gunnery Sergeant Sebastian Guzman (rear-left), High Desert Toys for Tots coordinator, and Cpl. Alexis Spears (front-left), High Desert Toys for Tots assistant coordinator, reach out to catch plushy toy animals being tossed to them by employees of First Student Inc., the bus service used by Barstow Unified School District, Barstow, California, Dec. 2.

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2021 WINTER SAFETY MESSAGE

The winter season is a joyous and festive time of the year, when Marines, Sailors, Civilian Marines, and their families, both at home and abroad, spend time with their families, friends, and loved ones. Each of you earned this privilege through your hard work in defense of our great nation. Take this opportunity to celebrate. Where possible, make time to celebrate the season with your fellow warriors, especially those of us who are deployed around the globe and away from home.

2. This season can also be one of the most deadly periods for our Corps. Mishaps and accidents peak during the winter season, and each year, Marines and Sailors are lost due to preventable mishaps. This winter, be aware. Have a plan and stick to it. We need each of you to return to your unit safely and ready to train.

3. If you are traveling, plan ahead. Whether you are close to home or traveling across the country, understand your risks. Do not accept driving fatigue, take breaks, and get enough sleep. Winter conditions can change quickly. Be ready, and if you are delayed by weather or some unforeseen circumstance, do not push it. Call your chain of command and make arrangements to return safely.

4. Many of us will toast friends, family, and our fellow Marines. If you are of age and choose to drink alcohol, have a plan and do it safely. Moderate your intake and have a designated driver or call a Rideshare. There is simply no excuse for drinking and driving.

5. Never forget that Marines and Sailors are the single most important weapon the Marine Corps has. This winter, be aware. Have a plan and stick to it. We need each of you to return to your unit safely and ready to train.

MCLB Barstow's 21st Annual Holiday Party

The keeping of traditional holiday celebrations is important for our Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow Marines, Sailors, Civilians and their families. Enjoy food and beverages for the family and photos with Santa for the kids!

When: 5 PM to 8 PM on December 17, 2021

Where: Major General James L. Day Conference Center

In order to maintain a high state of morale, camaraderie, and family welfare, MCLBB will continue to take all COVID-19 precautionary actions to ensure all members and their families enjoy a fun and safe environment. Due to COVID restrictions, a secondary, outdoor location has been included.

HOLIDAY HOURS:

December 19 - 25, 2021

SUNDAY 12/19
CLOSED

MONDAY 12/20
9:30 AM 6:00 PM

TUESDAY 12/21
9:30 AM 6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY 12/22
9:30 AM 6:00 PM

THURSDAY 12/23
9:30 AM 6:00 PM

FRIDAY 12/24
9:30 AM 4:00 PM

SATURDAY 12/25
CHRISTMAS CLOSED
A hero for the holidays

Story by: Laurie Pearson
COMMSTRAT Chief

Local school bus drivers help raise a bus load of donations for the High Desert Toys for Tots campaign here in Barstow, California, throughout November.

Gwendolyn Cole, bus driver and trainer with First Student, Inc., school bus transportation systems, headed the effort. She organized four “Fill the Bus” events, collecting toys and monetary donations in town.

The Marine Corps has been engaging in Toys for Tots drives since 1947, with the intent of making a difference in American lives. Toys for Tots was the brain child of Marine Corps Reserve Maj. Bill Hendricks. His wife, Diane, had a few handcrafted dolls and asked Hendricks to deliver them to an agency that supports children in need.

In his civilian job, Hendricks was Director of Public Relations at Warner Brothers Studios. He was friends with celebrities whom he asked to help support the newly created Marine Toys for Tots Program. As a personal friend, Walt Disney himself designed the first Toys for Tots poster which included a miniature three-car train that was subsequently adopted as the Toys for Tots logo.

Since that time, the campaign has distributed 604 million toys, to 272 million children in need.

“When I started working for First Student, as a bus driver, things were tight,” said Cole. “I applied for assistance with Christmas toys for my children, and Toys for Tots really came through.”

Having experienced, first hand, the magic that Toys for Tots can help create for families in need, Cole knew that she would one day be on the other side of things, able to help others in need.

“I’m now in a position where I can give back,” she said. “Our organization is a big part of this community.”

The company busses students to and from local schools and their homes on a daily basis. So, the drivers get to know the children and their families.

“This is also a big military based community, and a community with a lot of families that may have special needs,” Cole said. “It’s important to stay connected, to reach out and to help when and where we can. I’m really honored to help coordinate the Toys for Tots collections in this way and then to get them to the Marines for distribution.”

Each of the donations is a new, unwrapped toy for children of all ages.

“The toys are distributed to various organizations in the High Desert Community, and those organizations ensure that they are given to families in need within their community,” said Gunnery Sgt. Sebastian Guzman, Operations staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, and Toys for Tots coordinator for Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow. “These toys help children who usually may not have the joy of opening brand new presents for the holidays.”

Additional collections are done on the base at the front gate to Nebo and at both Yermo gates, on Tuesdays, with the last one being December 21, so they can be delivered to the distributing organizations well before Christmas.

So, as employees arrive on base for the next two Tuesdays, they can hand a new unwrapped toy to the Marines or Firefighters at those gates, until 7 a.m.

“There are also collection boxes at all Marine Corps Community Services sites on base, as well as 1st Force Storage Battalion, and Production Plant Barstow locations, and those will remain in place until December 17,” Guzman said. “There’s another one at building 15 in the Business Performance Office.”

Throughout the entire High Desert there are additional collection boxes. In Barstow, you can find them at Caldwell Banker, Lacoste store in the outlet mall, and the Travel Center of America in Lenwood.

“We also worked with Quick Quack Car Wash, so that everyone who gets a car wash at any of their southern California locations will have the option of donating to Toys for Tots,” Guzman said. “They have two locations in the High Desert, for people in this area to use in order to participate, but they’re all over southern California. Then they’ll be presenting a check to the High Desert Toys for Tots Program.”

The donated funds will go directly to the purchase of additional toys for donation and distribution.

“This program really brings the community together so that they’re actually helping each other to make the holidays more special for those children who need support,” Guzman said.

If you have questions about the program, would like to find locations to donate, or would like to sign up with one of the distributing organizations, go to the MCLB Barstow Toys for Tots website: http://barstow-ca.toysfortots.org. Connect with any of those agencies which are located throughout the high desert to apply to obtain toys.

Photo by: Jack Adamyk


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Holiday stress relief

Story by: Laurie Pearson
COMMSTRAT Chief

Between holidays and pandemic, Behavioral Health staff aboard Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow offer myriad suggestions and options for handling all that stress.

"Social anxiety, distance from loved ones, anxiety about family dynamics, those who are newly divorced or newly married, concerns about overspending, loss of job, or overextending yourself are just a few of the forms of stress that people are currently experiencing," said Michelle Adams, Family Advocacy Program Prevention and Education specialist, and Victim Advocate on base. "People are stressed about how to safely gather, or concerned about how they might not be able to celebrate as usual. Isolation from friends and family is causing people to experience frustration and depression. Others might be experiencing grief and loss of someone from COVID-19. Others may be anxious or worried about someone currently impacted by COVID-19."

In some cases, families may experience disagreements about personal stances or perspectives related to conflicting viewpoints on vaccine mandates or wearing masks.

"Stress may even cause a weakened or compromised immune system for some people," Adams said. "For others it may cause them to take more precautions about safety. Some people may experience depression, which can impact some behaviors such as over or under eating, or not being able to sleep."

"Some people may come down with physical ailments such as stomach issues, headaches or pain in the body," said James Maher, Behavioral Health Section head.

One key stressor during the holidays, is buying gifts!

"People are trying to please everyone, whether it’s by buying the 'right' gifts, or doing the things they think other's want of them," Maher said. "Then there are financial issues, hosting company over during the Holidays, and kids are out of school. All of these are stressors. You are supposed to be joyful, but missing relatives and grieving may dampen that joy."

Others who might experience heightened stress are those who are newly married, those who are recently separated or divorced, or perhaps those who have recently had a new child. Others may have recently lost a beloved pet.

People also lose their routines and may neglect exercise or self-care routines. One thing that can help is to set limits and boundaries.

"Don't be afraid to say no, and be sure to eat, drink and spend in moderation," said Jennifer Grunwald, FAP Prevention and Educational Specialist and Victim Advocate. "Be realistic in expectations for yourself and others, and reach out to others when feeling overwhelmed. Focus on kindness and gratitude. Maintain social and religious or spiritual connections and concentrate on self-care."

Self-care can look different to everyone.

Want to be a Special Government Employee?

Story by: Laurie Pearson
COMMSTRAT Chief

As the Voluntary Protection Program grows, leaders are seeking additional SGEs to participate aboard Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California.

"A Special Governmental Employees is a broad term used to refer to individuals who have knowledge or expertise appointed to consult or work with the Federal Government in an advisory capacity," said Master Sgt. Evan LaBounty, Safety and Occupational Health specialist. "In the context of MCLB Barstow, SGE's are used to support OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program."

SGEs assist Occupations Safety and Health Administration with doing VPP on-site evaluations at locations all over the country. Some of these evaluations are for sites submitting a new application to become VPP certified. Others include doing audits recertification, and helping with annual reports.

"SGEs may even assist the Department of Defense in doing pre-audits of sites that are interested in becoming VPP certified," said Sara Diaz, Safety and Occupational Health specialist.

It also helps the evaluation processes to have SGE’s from different backgrounds.

"If you have knowledge in fall protection and electrical work, you may be looking at that site's programs for those functional areas," Diaz said. "If you’re better with numbers and paperwork, you may be reviewing their mishap rates or reviewing the written safety and health management system and supporting documents. You don't need a Safety background to do the tasks of inspections and audits. We have SGE’s from the Comptroller Department, Supply, and Fire, too."

To qualify to become a VPP SGE, you have to be on the current duty station for a minimum of two years and be involved in Safety or VPP functions on base. So if you are on base for more than two years and are interested, but do not have Safety or VPP background you can still qualify, as long as you volunteer for some safety inspections, or as a CDSO.

"There are many other ways to show that you have participated in the Safety program in some way," Diaz said. "These volunteers must be approved by OSHA and are funded by the Safety Department to participate. After submitting an application and completing the required training, these volunteers are sworn in as SGEs and are approved to assist OSHA."

An SGE may be sent anywhere in the U.S. and U.S. territories, that are VPP sites, or wanting to become a VPP site.

"We have had audits in Guam, Hawaii, Colorado, Texas, Wyoming, just to name a few," Diaz said.

"I got to go stay in Hawaii for an audit, fully paid by the program," said Ruby Adams, Safety Technician. "We do not limit our SGEs to staying within our Region. We like to be able to assist all VPP regions with their SGE audits, all over the country."

The OSHA rules say that in order to remain an SGE you must do at least one audit, this can be a document review or an onsite visit, at least once every three years.

"At MCLB Barstow we have a goal of at least one audit, per SGE, per year," Diaz said. "However, if you do a more, that is ok and if you can’t do it for that year, that’s ok, as well."
SGE, cont. from page 9

The Safety office budgets for the audits and the training. Travel is not required for each event, but for some SGEs, the paid travel is sometimes the best part.

“It’s nice to see new areas and to see different industries and how they work their programs,” Adams said. “Sometimes you can do a virtual audit or you can do a document review from your current work location, so you don’t have to travel at all. It depends on the type of audit and what you want to sign up for.”

How much time you spend on audits and OSHA taskers is up to you. It is based on how much you wish to volunteer for, and how much your supervisor is willing to let you do.

If you do one audit a year, it will take you a week away from work,” Diaz said. “So, if you choose to only do the one audit, you will only be gone for one week per year, generally speaking. Now being involved in VPP while being an SGE takes only an hour a month at the monthly VPP meetings held at the base Safety Office in building 168. If you want to volunteer on base to help with projects while being an SGE, which may be a few hours a month, it’s really not that much time taken away from your job.”

Another benefit to the process is the ability to return to the base with information and best practices from those other sites, to the benefit of this installation. The SGEs learn from private industries or other installations and are able to use some of those new best practices in their daily jobs.

The VPP has a 20-year history, and the average VPP worksite has a Days Away Restricted or Transferred (DART) case rate that is 52 percent below the average for its industry, making them safer places to work.

“Participation in VPP can also lead to lower employee turnover, increased productivity and cost savings,” Diaz said. “Being an SGE is a contributing factor in these numbers. There are a lot of benefits from being an SGE. Networking is huge. You meet a lot of people from around the country and in different industries. You can even take OSHA training courses free of charge when you are an SGE, boosting your own resume. You also demonstrate that you take time and effort to go above and beyond, and become a partner with OSHA keeping workers as safe as possible. By getting out and learning new things and gaining the experience, being an SGE can be very beneficial to your resume and future career opportunities.”

In August of this year, three new SGE’s were trained and sworn-in: Master Sgt. Evan LaBounty, Safety specialist; Mark Reeves, Safety specialist; Paul Aguilar, Fire Prevention specialist. Reeves and LaBounty completed their first SGE audit, as well.

“I want to welcome all three to the SGE family and would encourage anyone from all different departments to join,” Diaz said.

If you are interested in becoming an SGE, go to base Safety and fill out the SGE package, and include your resume as well as other required documentation. That package will then be submitted to OSHA.

“The trainings are then done with OSHA,” Diaz said. “So, depending on when you apply it can take a few weeks to a couple months to get it all approved and scheduled for training.”
MCLB Barstow
Toys for Tots Tuesday

Look who’s here in the “St. Nick of time, with the longest list ever... and he’s asking for help!

This year Santa needs our help more than ever. In the High Desert, many children face the prospect of finding nothing under the tree this year. Your donation of a new unwrapped toy can bring a more joyful Christmas to an underprivileged child.

Drop your toys off at the front gate when you come to work!

MCLB Fire Department personnel will be at the front gate of Nebo, and both Yermo gates on Tuesday November 30, and December 7, 14, & 21 from 0545 to 0730 to collect the toys.

Sponsored by the Barstow Communities. Coordinated at MCLB by the MCLB Fire and Police Departments.

Monetary Donations can be given at the gate or you can go to http://barstown-ca.toysfortots.org. Select Donate Online

ICS Coordinator: GySgt Sebastian Guzman 577-6866

For more information call: MCLB Fire Department at 577-7320, 577-6866 or 577-6865.