

WINGSPAN



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Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas

December 17, 2009



Happy Holidays!
Santa Claus visits NASCC

Page 12



VT-31 takes 2009 Captain's Cup

Page 5



Pearl Harbor Veterans Honored

Page 4

HM-15 launches final flight from NAS Corpus Christi Last MH-53 departs for Blackhawks' new home in Norfolk



(above) AW3 Jonathan Lane does pre-flight checks on Hurricane 17, the last MH-53 Sea Dragon to leave Naval Air Station Corpus Christi for HM-15's new home in Norfolk, Va. (left) Hurricane 17 departs in drizzle Dec. 7.

Story and photos by Rod Hafemeister

A cold drizzle fell on the small group of Sailors who turned out Dec. 7 to witness the end of an era – and, for most, a new assignment.

The remaining members of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15) held up cell phone, digital and video cameras to record the departure of the last squadron MH-53 Sea Dragon to depart Naval Air Station Corpus Christi for HM-15's new home in Norfolk, Va.

The lift-off of "Hurricane 17" from the sea wall airstrip ended 13 years of mine countermeasure helicopter operations in South Texas.

"HM-15 moved to NASCC in 1996 from Alameda, Calif.," said Senior Chief Jeremy Sturgeon, Lead Chief for the NASCC detachment. "Now, it's moved to Norfolk.

"Our mission has not changed at all. The only thing that has changed is our homeport."

HM-15's mission is to maintain a world-wide, 72-hour airborne mine countermeasures (AMCM) rapid deployment posture.

It also maintains four MH-53s and 100 Sailors forward deployed in the Persian Gulf region on a rotational schedule.

The squadron has 14 MH-53 Sea Dragons, the largest helicopter in Western military use.

Hurricane 17's four-man crew – Lt. Cmdr. Ian Wolfe, Lt. Steve Mason, AWS2 Nicholas Reit and AWS3 Mark Covington – were scheduled to follow the Gulf Coast to Destin, Fla., where they would rest over night before continuing to Norfolk the next day.

That leaves 60 Sailors assigned to HM-15's Corpus Christi detachment, but only a dozen are slated to move to Norfolk.

"The other 48, including me, will be moving to new assignments," Sturgeon said.

HM-15 continued on page 9

CCAD, area bikers dig deep for Marine's Toys for Tots



The Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots got two major boosts in the final weeks of the campaign. On Dec. 8, Corpus Christi Army Depot delivered truckloads of toys collected by its workers: 1,779 toys plus 133 bicycles. (Above left by Bob Torres.) Two days earlier, about 1,500 bikers braved a cold, damp morning for the annual Toys for Tots Motorcycle Rally and delivered 386 toys and \$1,368.50 in cash. (Above right by



Rod Hafemeister). 'I just want to thank the community and the base for coming together for such a great cause in supporting our mission towards Toys-for-Tots!' said Marine 1st Sgt. Krishtian Nielson. 'It has been slow and low this year; however, I greatly believe that we will accomplish this mission in providing a Merry Christmas to all of our friends in need who are going through rough times these days.'

Skipper's Column

by Capt. Randy Pierson



Pierson

As we step into the holiday season, I would like to begin with offering my sincere thanks for the successes we have shared across the installation.

Upon my reporting to NASCC in July 2008, it was immediately clear to me that I

had come to a Naval Air Station that needed a lot of attention and support.

And in just a few hours, I recognized that the people who live and work aboard NASCC were going to support me in that effort every inch of the way.

Day in and day out, it remains clear to me that the many successes we share are only because of our people; our relationships, our shared goals and our combined passion for what we do.

As I look in the rear-view mirror, I see the challenges we faced regarding infrastructure, base improvements, contracting and efficient mission accomplishment.

It has not been an easy haul, but I would definitely suggest it has been successful.

In countless examples of success – surge operations with TRAWING 4, flight-line QOL and mission upgrades, road repairs, utility

Holiday Thanks

improvements, the new gate, the new military working dog facility, the new aviation trainer building and dozens of construction projects – we have succeeded.

With each step of improvements, I see the effects in your appreciation.

With improved quality of life, I see higher morale and additional ease of mission accomplishment by the tenant commands.

My point in this article is simple: It is to give thanks to you, the men and women of NASCC and all our tenant units, this holiday season. With so many families sacrificing for our mission, for our passion, it becomes abundantly clear to me: Through you, I have so much to be thankful for.

Have a Safe and Happy Holiday Season!

Chaplain's Message

by Lt. j.g. Rob Fasnacht, Chaplain

Advent season is upon us. There are advent wreaths and chains and calendars, all of which help us look forward to Christmas morning.

An Advent wreath encompasses four candles along its ring, plus a center candle, the Jesus candle.

In some traditions, the four candles represent hope, peace, joy, and love.

Each one of these four virtues is a gift that we can give someone else this holiday season.

Hope is the gift of knowing that something better is coming.

As a Christian, my hope is in heaven. No matter how bad things get on this earth, I know that I have a mansion in heaven situated by streets of gold. I have hope in a whole new life to come.

This hope gives me the freedom to live without the bondage of fear.

Peace is a gift that we can give to others.

This holiday season, instead of a material gift, maybe you need to give someone the gift of forgiveness and to bring peace into a rocky relationship.

Joy is more than a giddy gift, it is the gift of finding that silver lining in the dark storm clouds.

Joy is the ability to be able to overcome your obstacles with a positive outlook.

Yes, joyful people tend to have a cheerful disposition, but joy is about being happy and content from the heart, even when life hands out gloom.

And love. Love is the most amazing gift of all to give to someone.

May we all give this gift of love in our presence – and presents.

To quote St. Paul, "Love is patient, love is kind.

Four virtues

"It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

"Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

"Love never fails."

It is my Christmas wish for us all is that we love others with that kind of love.

May we not keep records of who's got the biggest presents, but may we live a life of love that always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.



Fasnacht

Editor's Corner

by Rod Hafemeister



Hafemeister

memorable than others.

I still have a clear picture of me at 2 or 3 years old riding my new rocking horse, Christmas bow still on its "mane," while watching a cowboy show on the old round-screen black & white television.

Most of my Christmas memories are ghost images, but some are rather substantial

Amid all the hustle, bustle and stress of getting ready for Christmas, I sometimes slow down and remember some past Christmases.

This year will be my 59th Christmas, and some of them are a lot more

ghosts. Probably the strongest memory from growing up was the year-after-year scramble to get the Christmas tree up the last few days before Christmas.

My Dad's best friend ran a tree nursery, and sold both live trees you could pick out and have cut and flocked trees – trees sprayed with an artificial snow.

Dad did a lot of the flocking in a special spray booth they built and always got first choice of a tree for us.

And year-after-year, some customer wanted that tree and offered too much money to turn down.

So we had a series of Christmas trees that began life looking like Charlie Brown's spindly one, made whole by strategically drilling and plugging branches into the trunk and covering the repairs by flocking it.

But the truly different Christmas ghosts came after I grew up and left home.

The first was while I was in college; had

Christmas ghosts

to be about 1971. Michigan State University was on a quarter system, with the holidays falling between fall and winter quarters, leaving the campus largely empty. But a number of out-of-state students remained.

I was recently married and we weren't going home because my wife had to work. We put together a Christmas meal of turkey and fixings and took it to my old dormitory.

Someone got plates and silverware from the closed cafeteria, someone else got some beverages, people brought down are packages of cookies and snacks from home – and about 15 of us had a great Christmas dinner.

In 1976, I was working on an Army division staff in Germany. I was unaccompanied, my best buddy was stateside, the bosses I'd been close to had moved on and I was scheduled to PCS in January – so rather than sit alone in my squalid little apartment, I volunteered for Christmas Day staff duty NCO.

Ghosts continued on page 11

Wingspan

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Achievement Medals for Naval Air Station Corpus Christi Sailors



Naval Air Station Corpus Christi awarded Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medals to five Sailors during an awards ceremony Dec. 1. Pictured left to right are AO2 Christopher Polson, AO2 Victoria Brown, AO1 Richard Steinborn, BU1 Marcos Arreola and EM2 Spencer Walker. Photo by Rod Hafemeister

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December 7 – Pearl Harbor Day at Sherrill Park

Story and photo by Bob Torres

Last year there were seven. This year there were four Pearl Harbor survivors at the Dec. 7 Memorial Service at Sherrill Park.

Three stood out easily in their light blue windbreakers with their names and “Pearl Harbor Survivor” embroidered on the front. The fourth was an Army veteran who had also survived the attack.

The Veteran’s Band, some in new black uniforms, played martial and patriotic music throughout the ceremony, as Emcee Juan Saenz introduced the day’s speakers. Each of the service flags and the POW flag were presented, a dialogue of what each service meant, and then they were “posted” and displayed for the event.

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi Chaplain, Lt. j.g. Rob Fasnacht, said an Invocation prayer and then all stood for the National Anthem.

“My warmest welcome to the Pearl Harbor survivors from all services, US Navy, US Marine Corps, and US Army, if it was not for you we wouldn’t enjoy the lives we live today,” intoned Navy Capt. Randy Pierson, commanding officer of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, the guest speaker. “What a beautiful day to honor those that served so bravely during such a critical time in our Nation’s history.”

Other World War II veterans, Mayor Joe Adame, Councilwoman Betty Jean Longoria, family and friends joined in the overcast, drizzly day to honor our heroes.



NASCC CO Capt. Randy Pierson, Corpus Christi Mayor Joe Adame and other veterans with four area veterans who survived the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941, in a ceremony at Sherrill Park.

Something added to this year’s program was Navy Veteran Bobby Broderick, Base Commander of “Sea Turtle Base” U.S. Submarine Veterans, who strode forward and spoke of World War II submarine actions. After he described how a claxon would sound and the words, “DIVE! DIVE! DIVE!” invoked actions by the submarine crew, another veteran read the names of some of the submarines that were lost, the number of crewmembers aboard, and a bell rang after each submarine name. More than 60 submarines and their crew were lost during

that war.

Ram Chavez, Veteran’s Band Director, sang “God Bless America” as Band members marched on a large “Holiday Flag” in front of the flag pole that already had the National Ensign and the POW flag raised earlier in the ceremony. Then the Pearl Harbor Survivors were escorted to the front as the audience stood and rendered honors.

Some of the Survivors had taken halting steps as they got up from their chairs and moved in front of the flag. Yet after the music ended and they made their way back to their

seats, there was a spring in their step as maybe they remembered what it was to be young.

The congregation stood as veterans fired a 21-gun salute and “Taps” was played.

Men who once stood straight and tall now stood as straight as they could, as tall as they could, as the ravages of time have brought them on this misty, grey morning. Their bodies now bend to weathering of time, but their pride is still evident in the hard, straight look in their eyes.

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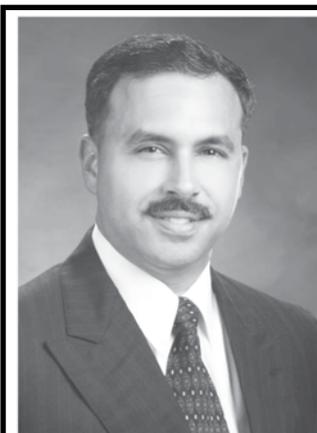
Reenlistments for AO1 Richard Steinborn and EN2 William Akers



Two of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi's Petty Officers reenlisted recently before leaving for new assignments. (left) NASCC CO Capt. Randy Peirson reenlisted AO1 Richard Steinborn Nov. 30 prior to Steinborn leaving for his new



job, training Navy recruits at Naval Station Great Lakes. (Photo by Bob Torres) (right) Chief Warrant Officer James Porter reenlisted EN2 William Akers on Dec. 3. Akers leaves to return to sea duty. (Photo by Rod Hafemeister)



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“TLC” = Tree, Lights and Candle - Safety

from NASCC Fire & Emergency Services

The holidays are upon us, as is the seasonal statistical increase in devastating home fires.

A new acronym, “TLC,” has been developed in a partnership between the Underwriters Laboratories (UL), one of the world’s leading product safety organizations, and the National Fire Protection Authority, an authority on fire and life safety to help families prevent unnecessary fire and safety hazards.



John Morris, NASCC Fire Chief, said the new guideline provides information critical to ensure that you and your family have a safe and joyful holiday season.

“TLC” stands for Tree, Light and Candle safety.

“T” is for Tree

When outfitting a home with a Christmas tree, families must be mindful of unintended dangers.

“While Christmas tree fires are rare, they can be deadly,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president of communications.

“NFPA reports show that on average, a person died in one of every 15 reported Christmas tree fires.

As with most fires, following a few simple safety guidelines can prevent these fires from happening in the first place.”

- When you bring your Christmas tree home, cut one or two inches off the bottom and place the tree in water as soon as possible.
- Remember to keep your tree base filled with water at all times. Left un-watered over time, a tree’s needles can dry out and catch fire more easily.
- Keep your tree a safe distance (at least three feet) from fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, heating vents and other sources of heat.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.

“L” is for Lights

Families are encouraged to routinely examine decorations, whether new or old.

Holiday lights, extension cords and other electrical items may pose potential safety hazards, especially if they are counterfeit or do not legitimately bear a recognized safety certification mark, such as the UL Mark (the letters “UL” inside a circle).

An accredited safety certification mark is a great way to make sure your decorative item has been tested to UL requirements that help avoid foreseeable safety risks.

- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration before plugging it in. Cracked sockets, and frayed, bare or loose wires, can cause a serious electric shock or start a fire.
- Replace damaged items with new, UL-LISTED decorations.
- Be sure to use light strings that bear the UL Mark – the UL Mark on a product means that UL has tested samples of the product for risk of fire, electric shock and other hazards.
- Do not connect more than three midget light string sets together. Light strings with screw-in bulbs should have a maximum of 50 bulbs connected together.
- Turn off all electrical light strings and decorations in your home before leaving home or going to bed.

“C” is for Candle

Candles in particular are responsible for 71 percent of December home fires that begin as a result of improper decorating practices.

“While candles present the most significant fire hazard during the holiday months, all decorations should be inspected for safety,” said John Drengenberg UL’s manager of consumer affairs.

“By keeping safety top of mind, you and your loved ones can enjoy a safer holiday season.”

- Never leave a room where candles are lit. Always blow them out!
- Never place decorations near an open flame.
- Keep candles away from decorations, curtains, bedding, paper, furniture and other combustible materials.
- Keep candles out of the reach and path of children and pets to avoid the risk of having them accidentally tipped over.

More Helpful Links:

Christmas Tree Fire
www.fire.nist.gov/tree_fire.htm

Candle Safety
www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=638&URL=Research%20&%20Reports/Fact%20sheets/Candles

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Final UH-60 A-to-A recap Black Hawk launched

Story and photo by Ed Mickley, CCAD Public Affairs



The final UH-60 A-to-A recapitalized helicopter completed by CCAD was picked up by (l-r) Sgt. 1st Class Jesus Colon, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mark Simmons and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kevin Calloway.

Recently, moments after Maj. Gen. James Myles, Commanding General, Aviation and Missile Command, took off in the Corpus Christi Army Depot UH-1H Huey to attend a meeting at Fort Sam Houston, UH-60A crew members launched the last A-to-A recapitalized Black Hawk from the depot.

The UH-60A Recapitalization Program kicked off in 2002 with the induction of the first A-to-A aircraft at CCAD.

The first was delivered in 2003, marking the culmination of a successful partnership between Sikorsky Aircraft and the depot.

"Completion of the last UH-60 A-to-A aircraft is certainly a milestone of amazing success," said Col. Joe Dunaway, CCAD commander.

"More importantly it marks the next chapter of the Army's continued journey to recapitalize the entire UH-60A/L fleet."

The last UH-60 A-to-A recap Black Hawk took off and headed for Fort Rucker, Ala., with its crew from there: Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kevin Calloway, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mark Simmons, and Sgt. 1st Class Jesus Colon.

Designed to provide for infantry squad delivery anywhere on the battlefield, the Black Hawk is the Army's utility helicopter of choice.

Contributing approximately 2.4 million flight hours since 2003, it is the primary air platform used by commanders to initiate, sustain and conduct combat operations and can deliver arms, troops and supplies at a moment's notice.

Recapitalization, or "recap" for short, is part of the Army's ever-present effort to reduce platform sustainment costs and contain the expense of replacing aging helicopters with new ones.

Overhauling and upgrading structural, engine, and airframe components allows Army Aviation to realize an asset that is equal to or better than a new one.

"These programs provide Army Aviation

the most modernized and advanced UH-60 fleet at a significant reduced cost to the taxpayer," Dunaway said.

CCAD launched 142 aircraft during the program, delivered to Army National Guard units throughout the United States, and to the United States Army Aviation Warfighting Center at Fort Rucker.

Many have been deployed to the theater in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Utility Helicopters Project Office has monitored eight of these aircraft and found that they have experienced a significantly higher Mission Capable rate than UH-60A aircraft in the same units that have not been recapitalized.

Recapped Black Hawks showed improvements in reliability, availability, and maintainability (RAM). For example, two recap aircraft had significant improvement in RAM metrics compared to two non-recapitalized at the same location for the same amount of time.

"It restores the Army's aging fleet of UH-60 helicopters, expands the commander's training and tactical capability and provides the war fighter significantly enhanced mission readiness on the battlefield," Dunaway said.

CCAD continuously seeks to improve the process to meet customer satisfaction and demand. The benefits of a recapitalized aircraft are most definitively realized by the customer, the Soldier.

User feedback is consistently very positive and rewarding to the men and women of CCAD, Utility Helicopter Project Office and Sikorsky Aircraft Company.

"When you combine the skills and expertise of the UH-60 PM (project manager), Sikorsky Aircraft, and this depot - there is simply nothing they cannot do for our Aviation Soldiers," Dunaway said.

"It's an honor to be a part of this program and phenomenal team from the acquisition, OEM and industrial base."

HM-15 continued from page 1

HM-15's move to Norfolk is part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission's decisions to consolidate anti-mine warfare on the East and West Coast.

Minesweepers assigned to Naval Station Ingleside, which will close in 2010, moved to California this summer.

Most of HM-15 moved to their new home on the East Coast in September, but a detachment remained at NAS Corpus Christi to close down the operation and prepare Hurricane 17 for flight.

Although an MH-53, Hurricane 17 did not have some of the modifications installed that are needed for mine countermeasure operations. So it was designated as a supply aircraft – and for a long time, served the role of “hanger queen,” an aircraft from which parts could be temporarily scavenged to keep other helicopters flying.

As such, it had to be returned to full flight status before moving.

“When it lifted off the ground for the first time in November, there were a lot of cheers,” Sturgeon said. “It was the first time it had flown in more than 800 days.”

On Monday, Sailors stood in the drizzle as Hurricane 17's crew waited, engines running, for the cloud ceiling to rise enough for take-off.

Suddenly, the Sea Dragon rose to a hover, and slowly edged forward toward the water, then turned and rapidly disappeared into the mist.

Those remaining returned to the hanger to work on closing it for the final time.

The detachment expects to turn the hanger over sometime in January and, by early February, all remaining Blackhawks will have left for new assignments.

Sturgeon said he's ready to move on, but will treasure his time with HM-15.

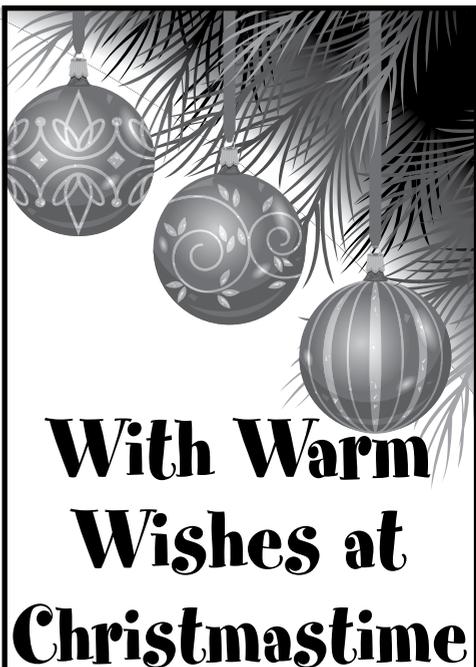
“I came here five years ago as a First Class, hoping to make Chief, I'm leaving as a Senior Chief,” he said. “HM-15 has been very good to me.”

Winter Holiday Camp and Youth Basketball Registration going on NOW!

The Youth Activities Center offers a Winter Holiday Camp Dec. 21-31 for children ages 5-13. Holiday camp hours are 5:30 am - 6 pm. Breakfast and afternoon snack is included in the weekly fee.

2010 Youth Basketball League Opening day is Jan. 9. Youth ages 4-12 are encouraged to sign up for the upcoming season. Entry fee is \$45. Registration forms can be picked up at the NASCC Youth Activities Center, Bldg. 1756. Volunteer coaches are needed for all age groups.

Please call the Youth Activities Center at 961-2355 for more information on these events.



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Vol. 3, No. 5
December 8, 2009

Everybody's Talking!

Do the right thing: Eleven-year-old Mikela Mercier never expected to find \$1,000 in cash inside a video box she picked up at a Salvation Army thrift store in Kona, Hawaii. Mikela says she knew she could have kept the money, but she also knew it wasn't hers to keep, so she and her mom, Jodi, immediately turned it in to the store clerks. "My friends told me I should have kept it, but I did the right thing," says Mikela. For her honesty, the Salvation Army gave the youth a \$25 gift certificate. The organization couldn't trace the owner of the money, so the cash was used to help the needy.

Dog hero: Chows may seem like cuddly, lovable dogs, but there's one named Jarod that's not afraid to tangle with a bear. Jarod's owner, Donna Perreault, and her other chow, Meesha, could have been seriously injured by an attacking bear near her home in Genelle, British Columbia, Canada. Luckily, Jarod came to the rescue, hanging at the bear and allowing Perreault and Meesha to escape. For his efforts, the brave pooch received an award at a Purina Animal Hall of Fame ceremony in Toronto. Perreault, who initially got Jarod from a shelter, didn't know that her pet would one day rescue her.

Huge sacrifice: Co-workers Mike Camp and Ralph Hanahan, who worked in the computer department at a college in South Carolina, faced a devastating situation. One of them was going to be out of work because of job cuts at the college. Hanahan, 55, had seniority, so he could rightfully keep his job. However, Camp, age 40, has four young kids, including one who is autistic. In an amazing act of generosity, Hanahan insisted Camp be the one to keep his job. "He told me he didn't want my family to have to deal with a layoff," says Camp. "I thanked him from the bottom of my heart."

Honesty rewarded: Santiago Gori, who drives a taxi in La Plata, Argentina, is being rewarded for his honesty after finding \$32,500 in cash in his cab and returning it to the elderly couple who left it behind. Argentines have started a website

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Holiday safety tips for your pet

by Sgt. Timothy S. Hair, US Army Veterinary Services

The holiday season is here and it is important to be mindful of pet safety during this festive season.

Many of the foods and decorations we enjoy can be hazardous to our pets. Pet owners need to keep the following tips in mind to help ensure a safe holiday season for ALL members of the family.

"People food," whether poisonous or just in excess, could make your pet sick. Chocolate, macadamia nuts, grapes and raisins are all poisonous for pets and can be fatal. Take care to keep holiday treats and candies out of your pet's reach.

Consider what is on your coffee table and how accessible it is to your dog and cat. Gifts under your tree that may contain food items; gift wrap will not stop a determined pet from eating good-smelling treats.

Many non-poisonous people foods, especially fatty foods, can still make your pet sick if consumed in excess. Avoid the temptation of indulging your pet because "it's the holidays;" feed their usual diet on their regular schedule.

Many decorations, especially the Christmas tree, can pose a danger to pets. If you have a fresh Christmas tree, keep the water stand covered; pine sap mixed with water makes a poisonous drink.

Consider securing your Christmas tree to a wall or to a ceiling hook with sturdy fishing line. If a pet decides to jump on the tree to get a tempting ornament or a large, wagging tail hits the tree, this will help prevent it from toppling over and injuring a pet or person.

Popular holiday plants and flowers, such as mistletoe, also are poisonous to pets. Poinsettias, believed to be poisonous by the public, rarely cause a problem if ingested. The most common signs of poinsettia ingestion are vomiting and diarrhea and these signs usually occur when large quantities are consumed.

Your pet may be tempted to mark unfamiliar trees or plants, so it may help to bring a tree or plant into an isolated indoor room for a few days so it smells more like "home."

Pick up any ornaments and ornament hooks that may have fallen; if a pet eats one of these items, it could injure their mouth or worse if the pet actually swallows it.

If your cat or dog is tempted to play with ornaments and knocks them off the tree, decorate the bottom third with non-breakable, plastic or wooden ornaments, or decorate only the top two-thirds of your tree.

Be wary of tinsel, string, and thin ribbon on the tree, on presents or around the house. If your pet ingests these, it could experience serious internal injuries.

Indoor holiday lights should be secured so they do not hang too low and entangle your pet. Supervise your pet to ensure they do not chew on light strands and, for extra safety, unplug lights when you are not home. Pets have been electrocuted from casually chewing on strings of lights.

Be mindful of the placement of burning candles around the house. A flying bird, curious cat or wagging dog tail could easily be burned by a poorly placed lit candle.

Pets, like people, experience holiday

stress. Changes in surroundings and environment, schedule changes due to shopping and travel, and increased visitors to your home are all stressful for your pet.

Keep your pet's exercise and feeding schedules as normal as possible. Try to continue to make time for daily walks and playtime, regular litter box cleanings, and regular grooming activities to help keep stress at a minimum.

If your pet is not used to a lot of company, especially children, try to provide them with a place to escape to where they will feel safe.

A stressed, scared pet is more likely to accidentally bite someone out of fear and an animal bite could easily ruin a holiday celebration.

Children, especially those unfamiliar with pets, are most likely to be bitten – so make sure there's plenty of supervision around your pets.

If you are traveling with your pet, be sure to plan for it. Include a small pet first aid kit and fresh water. Keep your pet's feeding schedule as normal as possible, but it is often better for your dog or cat to not travel on a full stomach.

Sedation or tranquilizers are normally not recommended, except in extreme cases. It is generally safer for your pet to be fully awake and aware during travel.

Use a pet carrier. Allow your dog or cat to become acclimatized to the carrier by leaving it out and open for several days before travel. Allow your friend to go in and come out as they wish. You can even start feeding your pet inside the carrier to make it a familiar and happy place.

When you travel, your pet will have a safe, secure place to go when they become stressed. It also insures your pet is secure during travel and reduces the risk of an accident from a pet underfoot while driving.

Finally, studies have shown just sitting and petting an animal can reduce a person's level of stress and decrease blood pressure.

So, when things get crazy around the holidays, take a moment to just relax with your furry friend. It will do you both good!

Have a safe and happy holiday!



ASPCA Animal Poison Control: www.aspcapointcontrol.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro_apcc_toxicplants

If you think that your animal may have ingested a poison, contact your local emergency veterinarian or the ASPCA 24-hour emergency poison hotline at 1-888-426-4435.

Ghosts continued from page 2

I've never eaten so well before or since.

First, the chief of staff, a colonel, came by with a Christmas breakfast.

Later, the division commander, a major general, showed up with a huge Christmas feast prepared by his aide/cook – way more food than the duty officer, the driver and myself could eat.

Then the company commander and the first sergeant showed up with cookies and cakes and ... you get the idea.

A few years later, I was stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash. My battalion had alert duty for Christmas and unit block leave starting for New Year's. My wife had left for Christmas with her parents and was going to meet me once my leave started.

I had just sat down for a small but nice dinner at the house of a civilian friend when I got a call from one of the guys working for me. A warm spell and rain melted snow on Mount Rainier and the Nisqually River was climbing out of its banks, threatening their apartment.

What started as a few guys trying to sandbag a single apartment quickly involved hundreds of people, tons of sand and truckloads of sandbags.

In about eight hours, we built a 100-yard dike that was more than six feet tall, 10 feet wide at the base and so solid that when a large tree hit it root-first, the tree bounced off without moving a single sandbag.

Then there were the Christmas interviews in 1989 with the first injured troops back from Operation Just Cause, the invasion of Panama.

There was 1990, when Christmas was just a short break from getting ready for the recall to active duty I knew was coming for the first Gulf War.

During the 1992 Christmas visit to the new Tanker Airlift Control Center at Scott Air Force Base, I was talking to a couple E-7s while television did interviews when one of them gave me a great opening line for my article.

I pointed out that the airlifters had been busy at Christmas the last four years: 1989 in Panama; 1990, Desert Shield; 1991, Northern and Southern Watch; and now with the build-up of forces in Somalia.

One NCO shrugged and said, "Just another George Bush Christmas."

Neither of us realized how it reflected the changing military world.

Every year since, US forces have not only been stationed overseas at Christmas, but have been deploying around the holidays.

In the '90s, it was Bosnia and Haiti and Kosovo, plus humanitarian relief operations.

And of course, since Sept. 11, 2001, U.S. troops have been deployed and deploying every Christmas.

Looking back, I take a simple lesson: If you will be with family and friends, enjoy this Christmas. If you are apart, find another way to enjoy it.

But also take a moment to think of those who cannot be here because they are defending us – and those who have become the true Christmas ghosts to their friends and families.

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Santa Claus comes calling

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Santa Claus had a busy week, starting with a visit to the Naval Health Clinic Dec. 4 (left, Bob Torres). Then a Coast Guard helicopter delivered him to a Dec. 6 party on the USS Lexington for the Pilot-for-a-Day program. (above left & right, by Charles Dekle). He finished by visiting NASCC housing with help from Fire and Emergency Services. (right and bottom, Bob Torres).



Awards and Achievements

Winging — December 4



Photo by Hugh Lieck Event Photography

Winging officials, from left: Lt. j.g. Robert Fasnacht, Chaplain; Lynwood Cain, Jr., Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce; Lt. Col. G. J. Fabbri, Commanding Officer, MATSG-22; Lt. Col. Robert Blagg, USAF, Commanding Officer, VT-35; Cmdr. Denis Crews, Commanding Officer, VT-31; Capt. Robert Paulison, Commanding Officer, Sector Corpus Christi Coast Guard; Rear Adm. Richard J. O'Hanlon, Commander Naval Air Force Atlantic; Capt. David R. Price, Commodore, TW-4.

Wingees in alphabetical order: Lt. Hunter Tenzing Atherton, USCG; Lt. j.g. Dustin Ian Baldwin; Maj. James Vincent Fulginiti, USMC; 1st Lt. David Joseph Gonzalez, USMC; Ensign Kristofer Daniel Hawbaker; 2nd Lt. Gordon Elliot Hodgkins, USAF; Ensign Shane Derrick Kitterman; 2nd Lt. Roger Scott Knobloch, USAF; Lt. j.g. Anthony Ryan Martinez, USCG; Lt. j.g. Michael Scott Miller, USCG; Ensign Jonathan Robert Montes; Ensign Jacob Daniel Pitchford; Lt. j.g. Ashley Joyce Ruic; Ensign Antonio Russo, Italian Navy; Capt. Thomas Michael Ryan Jr, USAF; 2nd Lt. Kevin Andrew Simonds, USAF; Ensign Brett Michael Woodard; Ensign John Paul Wittrock.

NASCC Civilian Awards — Dec. 1



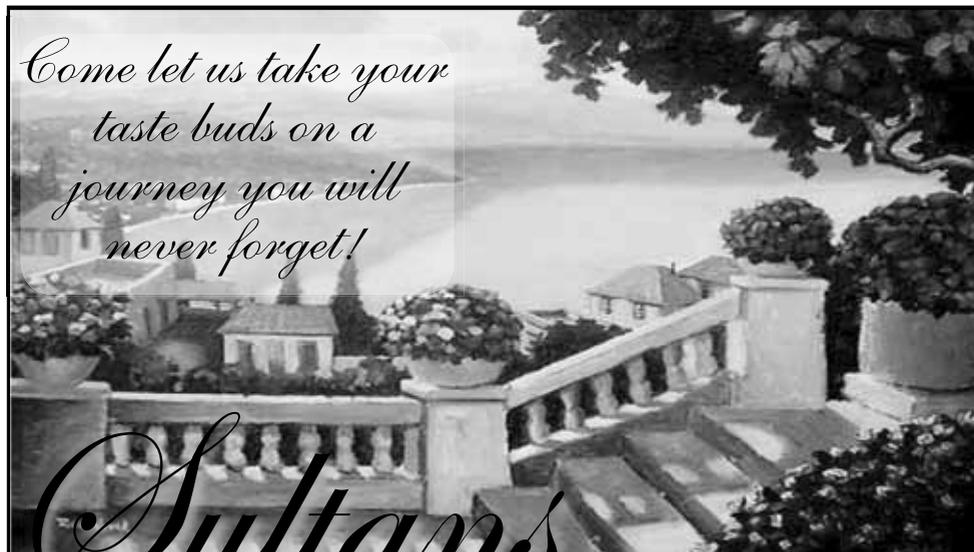
Photo by Rod Hafemeister

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi civilian employees were recognized in a Dec. 1 combined military-civilian awards ceremony. Pictured with NASCC Commanding Officer Capt. Randy Pierson are: 10 Years Service – James R. Alaniz, Joel A. Davis, Javier J. Morales and Johnny E. Twaits; 15 Years Service – Michael C. Harbison and Allen R. Wahlstrom; 20 Years Service – Ray H. Aranda, Daniel Rodriguez and Eric M. Trujillo; 35 Years Service – Arturo D. Dominguez; Civilian of the Quarter – Otis Terrell; and Senior Civilian of the Quarter Douglas J. Lange.



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What's Happening

by Tina Konwerski

Now thru December 24th - 7 pm til 10 pm. Come see the Lights! Christmas benefit for Ronald McDonald House, 4061 Panama Drive. All computerized show. Bring your own camera for pictures with Santa on Friday and Saturday nights. Several rooms are made up like Santa's house, plus raffle tickets, prizes donated from local businesses. Lots to do, plus elves with candy canes for kids.

NOW thru the end of December - Help the Muscular Dystrophy Association send children to Summer Camp. MDA of the Coastal Bend hosts a summer camp for children between the ages of 6-17, where friendships through shared interests builds self-confidence. Walgreens will be accepting donations throughout the month of December. Please visit your local Walgreens today and purchase a \$1 or \$5 Holiday Mobile in the shape of a present to give back to your community.

Every Tuesday at 7 p.m. – "Rialto Rhythms" ... No Admission! Feel free to BYOB. Find some solace from shopping and preparing for the holidays with music from the heart every week. All musicians and all musical styles welcome to join in! RIALTO THEATER & GALLERY, 327 E. Commercial Street, Aransas Pass (361) 758-0383 – www.rialtotheater.org

Now thru January 2, 2010 – "Harte Holiday Forest." Display of trees decorated by groups and organization in the Coastal Bend. The Janet F. Harte Public Library, 2629 Waldron Road, (361) 937-6569. Mon-Thurs 10a.m. to 9 p.m. – Fri & Sat 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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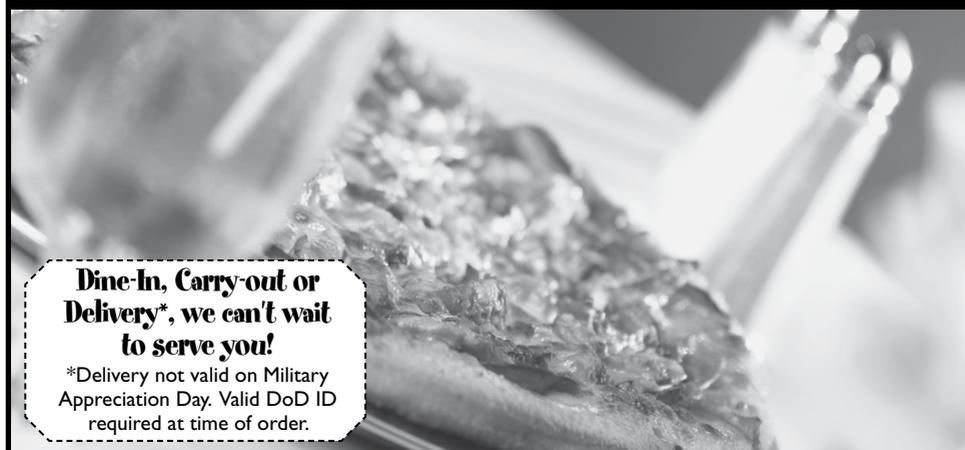
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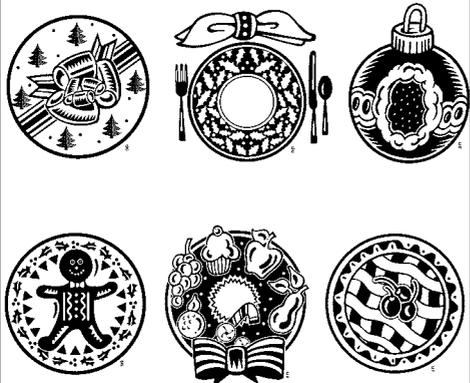
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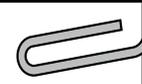
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Fun Holiday Recipe



Bisquick Butterscotch Brownies

- 2 cups Bisquick baking mix
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- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 cup margarine, softened
- 1 (3.5 ounce) can coconut
- 1-1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350F. Mix all ingredients and bake in a 9x13-inch pan for 45 minutes. Cool on rack, cut while warm.



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Ask Dr. Garcia



Q: I am a young male who recently met someone. Is there such a thing as love at first sight?

A: This is a good question. I'll answer it in general terms.

Love at first sight is a rare occurrence; individuals should not date with the hope that this will be the manner in which they meet their prospective mates.

Most marriages result from ordinary, routine dating and the building of a relationship without the glamour of love at first sight.

Most cases of individuals falling in love at first sight do not stand the test of personal interaction.

Many of these people are under emotional strain and regularly fall in love in times of stress.

It is quite easy for such a person to become infatuated with a new dating partner, to feel it is love at first sight. The new love experience acts as a release for the emotional stress the person is experiencing.

In the end, this type of relationship will probably be broken when the interaction between the two reveals incompatibilities that were masked by infatuation.

Q: My husband is reluctant to establish a budget system for our finances. Why is my husband apprehensive when it comes to controlling our money?

A: In his book entitled, *Money and Your Marriage*, Robert Crosson lists four barriers to having a system of control or a budget.

The first is that many people do not understand why a budget is needed.

It is needed to make sure the family lives within its income; this in turn will promote harmony and unity in the marriage.

The second barrier is failure to take time to set up a budget and to work out its shortcomings.

It may take a year or two to get a plan working smoothly. The problem here is determining realistic amounts for each item in the budget. It takes real discipline for each spouse to make the system work.

Dr. Garcia continued on page 17

Dr. Garcia continued from page 16

The third obstacle is developing a system that is too complicated.

Marital partners should avoid keeping track of every dime spent or trying to write down every expenditure. This is all right in the beginning, but may not be necessary as you and your husband become accustomed to the new spending habits.

The fourth barrier, according to Crosson, is the husband's fear of failure.

Crosson reports that men feel they should know all about money and don't need a budget. They usually are not as given to detail as their wives, and keeping a record of all a man spends may make him uncomfortable.

He may view the fact that a budget is needed as a reflection that his income level is not sufficient to allow the family to spend as they wish.

In such a case, you might need to assure your husband that you are content with his income and that the best reason for a budget is that the income can be utilized as wisely as possible.

Ruben G. Garcia, Ph.D., LMFT is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and co-founder of The Healing Institute. Submit your questions to Dr. Garcia via email at troubadour55@hotmail.com. You can also contact Dr. Garcia at (361) 814-4556.

Commissary Holiday Hours

The Naval Air Station Corpus Christi Commissary will adjust its operating hours for the holidays:

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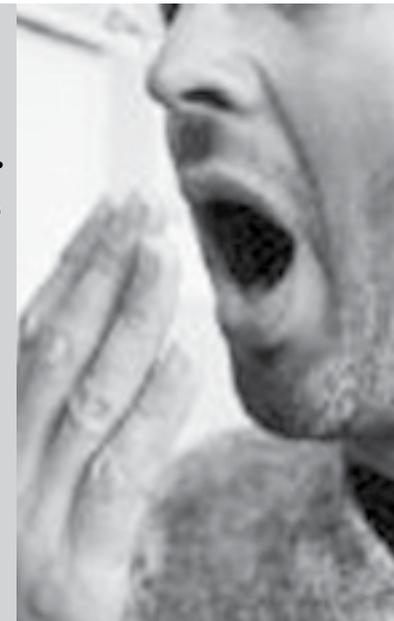
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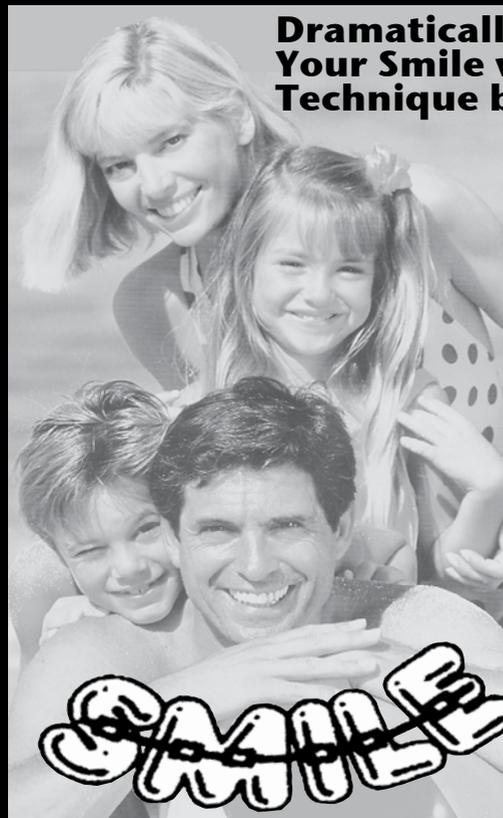
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Chief Tijerina retires after 21 years



Chief Information Systems Technician (NAC/AW) Mario T. Tijerina (right), from Sinton, Texas, received the Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal during his Retirement ceremony December 4 aboard the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay. Capt. R. G. Kelley, the commanding officer at Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi, made the presentation. Tijerina transferred to the Fleet Reserve after 21 years of naval service.

Photo by Bill W. Love

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CONOMAG's LS2 Taylor re-ups



Lt. j.g. Ronald Thompson administered the oath of enlistment to LS2 Ralph Taylor on Dec. 7. Taylor reenlisted for three years. Photo by LS2 Veronica Valdez

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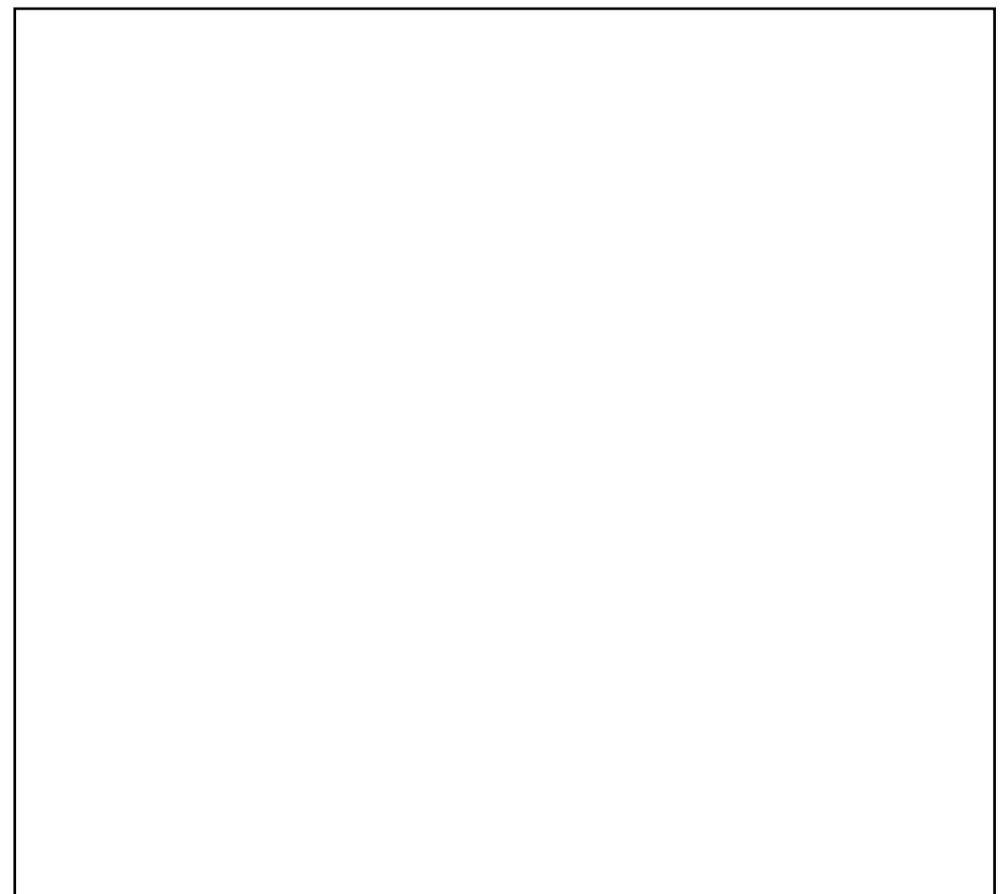
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Master Chief Childers re-ups



MNCM(SW) Randy Childers (right) was reenlisted for five more years on Nov. 30 by Cmdr. J. B. Vliet, Commander Mobile Mine Assembly Group.

Photo by YN2 (SW) Karl Heitschmidt

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YN2 Heitschmidt re-ups



YN2(SW) Karl Heitschmidt (right) was reenlisted for four more years on Nov. 18 by CDR J. B. Vliet, Commander Mobile Mine Assembly Group.

Photo by AG2(AW) Steven Hatchett

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Budget for Baby class helps parents-to-be

Story and photo by Rod Hafemeister

Expecting parents, whether first-timers or old hands, can get a jump start on the expenses of having a baby in the upcoming Budget for Baby class.

Sponsored by the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, the class focuses on planning and managing the expense of adding a family member.

"What we're trying to teach is basic budget techniques and show them the cost of having a child," said Heather Callaway, a CPA and Navy wife who is a volunteer instructor – and is herself expecting a baby in April.

"A lot of them just fly by the seat of their pants, and we're trying to stop that. It's amazing how many people don't realize how much you can save using coupons, menus and such."

NMCRS is trying to hold a class every quarter. The next class at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi is Jan. 20. A class also is planned in February for NAS Kingsville, with the date still to be determined.

Although it is better if both parents can attend, instructors realize that's not always possible, so even if only one can attend, sign up, Callaway said.

Besides instruction, each set of parents gets a "Baby's First Seabag" that includes a layette valued at \$100 and a handmade baby blanket.

"That's the Number One thing they love about the class, the Baby Seabag," Callaway said.

The next Budget for Baby class will be held Jan. 20 from 10 a.m. - noon at the NASCC Protestant Fellowship Hall. Call NMCRS at 961-3482 or DSN 861-3482 to sign-up. RSVP by Jan. 15.



Heather Callaway displays boy and girl "Baby's First Seabag" given those taking the Budget for Baby class.

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December 2009 ISSUE



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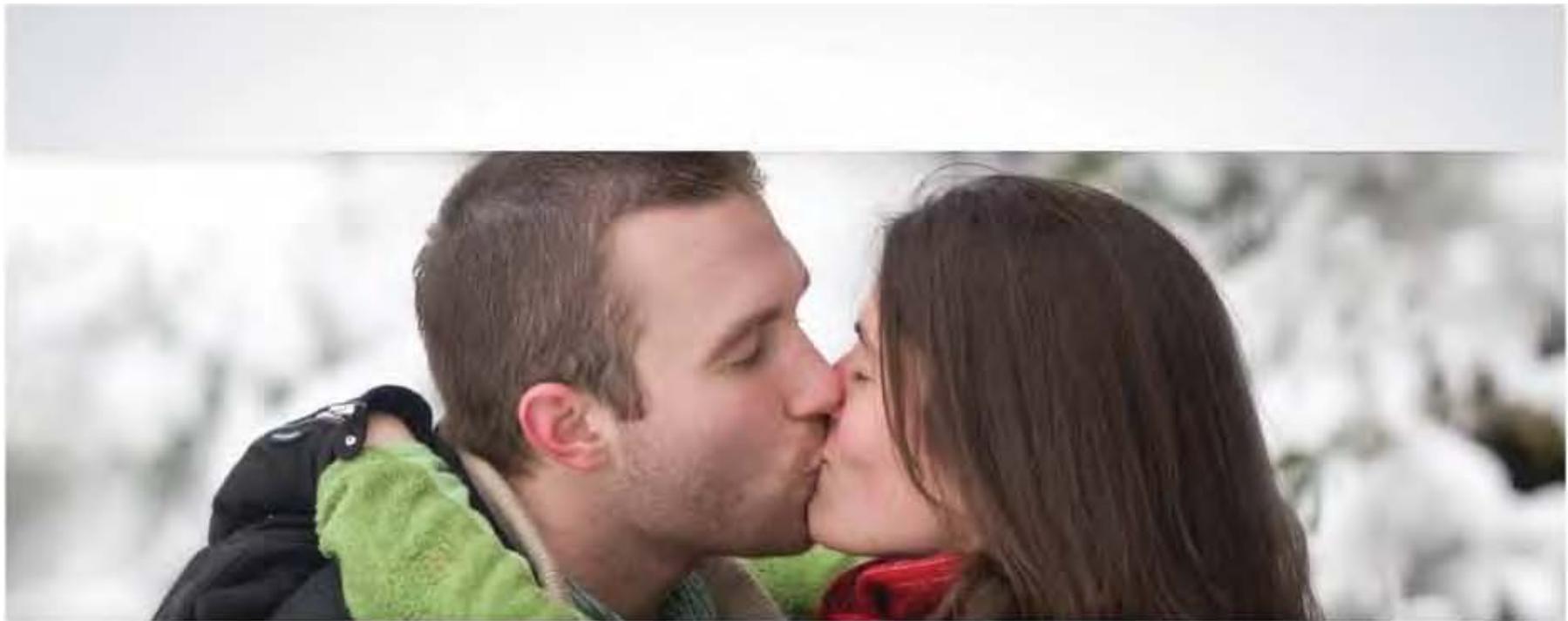
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