MCA&F education programs make Marines smarter, better prepared

2d MarDiv leaders agree: Commanders’ Forum programs are vital to continued Corps effectiveness

In the past year, Marines have walked the battlefields of Belleau Wood and Gettysburg ... stood on the landing beaches of Iwo Jima and Normandy ... and spoken one-on-one with historians, authors, and Marine veterans of some of history's greatest battles ... all as part of Marine Corps Association & Foundation Commanders’ Forum programs.

These programs are made possible through the generous support of our members and donors. One key component of these programs is inviting experts in various fields to speak to groups of Marines. Following a recent Commanders’ Forum event, we asked Col Kenneth DeTreux, Commanding Officer, 8th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division, and LtCol Trevor Hall, Battalion Commander, 3d Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division, for their thoughts on the importance of ongoing education in the Corps.

"The military isn't just a job, it's a profession," Col DeTreux said. “It requires continuing education and skill development to stay ahead, just like in medicine or any other field of study. Emphasizing continuing education throughout the Corps is just common sense.”

“War-fighting evolves with new technology and threats,” LtCol Hall added. “All Marines must keep learning to make sure the Corps"

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Photo courtesy of Cpl Sullivan Laramie
It's a privilege to serve the Corps. Thank you for helping us do it!

I never planned to be a Marine.

My grandfather was a Marine. He joined in 1902 and served in the Philippine Insurrection and the Boxer Rebellion. And my father was a Marine. He joined near the end of World War II, served three years, then rejoined to fight in Korea. He ended up making a career in the Corps.

So I grew up in a Corps family. And if you’ve read The Great Santini, you’ll know what I mean when I say I felt I’d already given plenty of years to the Corps by the time I got to college.

Crossing campus at San Diego State one day, I saw two Marine officer selection officers. I stopped to talk, and mentioned my goal was to become a high school counselor and track coach. One asked how I was going to pay for the master’s degree I knew I’d need. “You know,” he said, “if you serve two and a half years on active duty in the Corps, you’ll have enough to pay for that degree.”

I thought about it, and decided, “I can do it for two and a half years.” In the end, I spent 37 years and change on active duty. And I never regretted a moment. I thought about it, and decided, “I can do it for two and a half years.” In the end, I spent 37 years and change on active duty. And I never regretted a moment.

Marines and Marine families know the bond the Corps creates among those of us who are part of it. That’s why, even after leaving active duty, I’m helping advance leadership and recognize excellence in the Corps through my work with the MCA&F.

This is the second issue of SITREP in which we’ve taken a look at the many MCA&F programs that help strengthen the Corps. I hope you enjoy reading more about them. Thank you for your interest, and your partnership!

Semper Fi!

Ed Usher
Major General, USMC (Ret)
President and CEO

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Marines see terrorism face-to-face in Oklahoma City

20 years later, a survivor shares his story

The following is an excerpt from a recent cover story in Leatherneck: Magazine of The Marines.

Capt Randy Norfleet, USMCL, doesn’t know how long he was unconscious — maybe a minute, maybe longer — but when he regained consciousness, the dust had settled a bit.

“It was deathly quiet. It was just deathly quiet, and I don’t know how else to say it other than that,” Norfleet said, describing the eerie scene.

Sgt Tad Snidecor had sustained fewer injuries, and as an 0311 rifleman who had served with Norfleet in Operation Desert Storm, his training kicked in immediately.

“He was a Marine in charge,” said Norfleet. “He knew what to do.”

He cleaned off his desk, put Norfleet on top of it, and began to administer first aid. After a minute or so, he left to go find some material to bandage Norfleet’s wounds. However, Norfleet knew in his heart that if he stayed on the desk he was going to bleed out. He got up and started looking for a way out.

“Somebody had walked out of the building before I had, and they had left a blood trail … it was like a neon sign, a neon trail, right there on top of the dust. I followed the blood to the back of the building. Then, miracle of all miracles, all the stairs were intact at the back of the building,” Norfleet remembered.

Somehow, despite his injuries, he mustered the strength to walk down all six flights of stairs and into an ambulance. To this day, he considers it a supernatural experience.

MCA&F members can choose to receive a subscription to Leatherneck or the Marine Corps Gazette as a benefit of membership. That includes access to the magazine’s online archives — allowing you to read the rest of Capt Norfleet’s dramatic story! Join today by calling 866-622-1775, or visit www.mca-marines.org and click “Membership.”

“The Marine Shop was incredibly professional and incredibly friendly. It’s like an at-home tailor shop that cares about every Marine.”

– WO Christopher Balderston, USMC, Warrant Officer Basic Course, Quantico

“People can choose to receive their uniforms at The Marine Shop. How can we help you?”

– MIDN1/C Luis Penichet, USN

United States Naval Academy

Balderton adds, “I like my money going to help Marines. That means a lot to me.”

Visit The Marine Shop at Quantico or Camp Lejeune. Any uniform item, even tailored items, can also be ordered online at www.marinestore.com. We carry every book on the Commandant’s Reading List, and an amazing selection of other items. MCA members receive a discount on their purchases.

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Generations of Marines have purchased their uniforms at The Marine Shop.

“I sent an all-hands email to the Marines in my class saying they should go to The Marine Shop for their uniforms.”

– WO Christopher Balderston, USMC, Warrant Officer Basic Course, Quantico

“Some people told me there’s not much difference between The Marine Shop and the other place I could purchase uniforms, but I completely disagree,” he says. “There’s a huge difference. I feel like The Marine Shop made me part of their family. They’re not just trying to make a sale. I was very happy with the whole process, and the quality of their work is outstanding.”

“Knowing The Marine Shop is part of the MCA&F really helps,”

– MIDN1/C Luis Penichet, USN

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remains the most relevant and capable force, and is ready to respond to any crisis or contingency.”

Fortunately, Marines love to learn! Our retail team at The MARINE Shop reports that junior enlisted Marines often buy books from the company grade officers’ section of the Commandant’s Reading List.

“That doesn’t surprise me one bit,” Col DeTreux said. “Many of our younger Marines are very intelligent, very inquisitive, and very well informed about history and current events.”

Referring to the book Forgotten Warriors by T.X. Hammes, a Commandant’s Reading List title that explores the Marine Corps ethos before and during the Korean War, LtCol Hall explained why well-informed Marines are so important.

“I find many similarities between what Marines face today and what we saw in the era the book addresses,” he said. “We are currently in a post-war budget drawdown with a different world threat, just like the post-World War II Corps. It’s important for Marines to understand what we’re facing today isn’t new. Our service’s relevance is based on our individual ability to be ‘smart warriors’ through ongoing education.

“If Marines in 1950 could embark on ships, sail 45 days or more, then go straight into combat and defeat North Korean forces, today’s Marines should have confidence that we can meet the challenge if called on in a similar situation.”

The officers agreed on the value of MCA&F programs, and that the Corps would be worse off, today and tomorrow, if they weren’t available.

“Keep up the good work,” LtCol Hall said. “Thanks for all you do!”

To learn more about the Marine Corps Association & Foundation’s Commanders’ Forum programs, like the one Col DeTreux and LtCol Hall were discussing or our recent tour of the Gettysburg National Battlefield, and other ways we’re advancing leadership and recognizing excellence in the Corps, visit www.mcafdn.org. Thank you!