

ANCHOR WATCH

A photograph showing a casket draped in an American flag, resting on a hearse. In the foreground, the back of a sailor's head and shoulders is visible, wearing a white cap and a dark uniform with a yellow anchor insignia. The background is a red wall.

A loss for our family

Saying good-bye to Nicholas Forrest

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Changes to the Department of Defense Tuition Assistance program and Navy Voluntary Education

Policy changes to the Department of Defense Tuition Assistance program and Navy Voluntary Education were announced in NAVADMIN 029/12, released Jan. 24.

The changes were needed to provide better quality control over courses taken by service members as well as to reflect the realities of fiscal pressure to reduce Department of Defense (DoD) spending.

DoD instruction 13222.25 released in March 2011 required a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with academic institutions and DoD by January 1 to be eligible to receive TA funding. DoD recently moved the due date to April 1. As a result, the Navy's policies for authorizing Tuition Assistance (TA) have changed and Sailors will not be able to use TA for courses at institutions without a signed MOU by April 1. To help Sailors through this transition process, Sailors who meet all requirements for TA and submit a command-approved TA request prior to April 1 for courses beginning between April 1 and May 1 will be approved for TA regardless of their institution's DoD MOU status.

Sailors who meet all the above requirements but whose TA request is submitted after April 1 will be approved for TA only if their institution has a signed DoD MOU. Sailors can check the DoD MOU status of the academic institution they are attending by going to www.DODMOU.com and clicking on the "Participating Institutions" tab.

The NAVADMIN also outlines the requirement for Sailors to obtain a satisfactory grade of a "D" for undergraduate-level courses and a "C" for graduate-level courses. Sailors who fail to obtain a satisfactory grade will be required to payback TA funds.

The Navy will continue to provide TA funds up through the master's degree level for both officers and enlisted personnel. However, effective with the release of the NAVADMIN, the Navy will no longer authorize TA funding for new program starts above the master's degree level. The approximately 550 officers and enlisted actively pursuing doctoral-level degrees before the release of the NAVADMIN will be able to continue until completion of their degree program.

The combined cap for tuition and fees remains at \$250 per semester hour for up to 16 semester hours of course work a year.

Spirit of HOPE

Story provided by navy.mil

A ceremony to honor military recipients of the 2010 Spirit of Hope Award was held at the Pentagon, Nov. 15.

Petty Officer 1st Class Jamar J. Salters was presented with the award by Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Scott R. Van Buskirk, in recognition of his allegiance and selfless behavior to the needs of his fellow shipmates.

"I definitely appreciate the selection for this award," said Salters. "I'm honored by those that nominated me, and this is basically for the Sailors that followed the path that I pushed for education [and volunteering]."

Salters played an integral part in developing numerous education and volunteer opportunities to include the establishment of the Kunia Service Member Volunteer Organization, which resulted in 39 military volunteers committing more than 2,000 hours to community service. Six of those Sailors received the Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

Salters spoke about the importance of taking advantage of the opportunities the Navy gives Sailors and not letting those chances fall to the wayside.

"Make education a priority," said Salters. "I suggest not letting your career go by without getting educated, because there is always an opportunity to learn, and never give up the goals you have set for yourself."

The award's namesake, British-born American comedian and actor Bob Hope, was a huge contributor to United Service Organization tours and participated in many events to honor the men and women of the military.

Established in 1997, the award is given to one armed forces service member from each branch of service who demonstrates exemplary dedication to their fellow men and women in uniform, and community.



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ANCHOR WATCH
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A loss for our family
Saying good-bye to Nicholas Forrest



When Petty Officer 1st Class Shiela Rae Sipko was told she would be getting orders to Oceana, Va., she froze. With a house in Jacksonville, Fla., her enrollment in ministry school and her involvement in helping to establish The Church of Jacksonville, she wasn't at all prepared for the news of her upcoming transfer.

It was 2004 and the economy was booming. So after nine years as an Aviation Electronics Technician, with some unemployment benefits and a solid plan, she hung up her combination cover and took her chances as a civilian.

What she didn't anticipate was the economy bottoming out. She lost her job, her house, her car and ultimately, her dignity. Once again she found herself frozen – only this time she was determined to return to the warmth of a place she had always considered home, the Navy.

The long road home

By Terrina Weatherspoon

The long road home



Sipko at bootcamp graduation.

“Growing up, I was always enamored with military machinery and paratroopers,” said Sipko. “My childhood was spent living on an Army post. Later, while attending Kansas City University in Manhattan, Kan., most of my friends were GIs stationed at neighboring Fort Riley. I suppose it made sense that when college didn’t pan out for me, that I opted to pursue a military career.”

So in November of ’95 Sipko signed on the dotted line and headed to boot camp and then initial training in Millington, Tenn. From there she ended up aboard VP-45, a P-3

Squadron in Jacksonville.

“Back then, Sailors were kind of homesteaded on a particular platform and were sent to one of four locations: Washington, Hawaii, Maine and Florida,” said Sipko. “I had done both sea and shore tours at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, and just assumed I’d stay there. I was told my option was to change platforms to EA-6Bs out of Oceana, which at the time didn’t seem like an option at all.”

Leaving the Navy was one of the hardest decisions Sipko had ever made. However, despite the tears and sadness when requesting to go ashore for the last time, Sipko had the whole world ahead of her. She was 23 when she joined the Navy, and since that time she had amassed a plethora of job skills. She didn’t have a degree but she had plenty of marketable abilities: sales, aviation, marketing, accounting and corporate training.

“I knew my resume was strong, and my work ethic even stronger,” said Sipko.

Sipko chose not to join the Navy Reserves. Her involvement with the church kept her weekends tied up and so she chose to give her full attention to her new goals, Navy free.

Sipko was out of the Navy for a little more than four years. Upon first leaving the Navy she relied on unemployment insurance she had paid into during her Naval career.

“My first job after the Navy was with a religious organization, and after that I took a job in aviation as a private contractor,” said Sipko.

Neither of those organizations had any type of unemployment program. Because she knew she would not be able to fall back on unemployment, she saved enough to live four to six months. However, she would end up unemployed for nearly 13 months.

“In November of 2007, when gas prices started to skyrocket, commercial and private planes cut all extraneous flights. Subsequently, I was let go at the end of my contract,” said Sipko. “I wasn’t discouraged though, since I knew I could do more than fix planes.

“I immediately went to work looking for work. All day I would beat the pavement, going from place to place, dropping off resumes and trying to get interviews. All evening I would be in front of the computer, scouring job search websites and submitting online applications. No one was calling. Temp agencies said they had no work for me. It took about five months for me to really start getting anxious. No one was hiring, and my savings was drying up. I tried lowering my sights, thinking that even a cashier at Wal-Mart or a waitress at IHOP made more than nothing. But those places were either not taking applications or turning away applicants whom they thought would go back to their original industries after the recession lifted.”

That’s when a friend of Sipko’s requested that she try getting back into the Navy. And although she didn’t want to leave her church, she said she had to do something, and fast.

She contacted her local recruiting office in March of 2008.

“One of my squadron buddies had transferred to recruiting duty, so I figured I’d have an ace-in-the-hole for a speedy in process,” said Sipko. “It seemed odd to me when my old pal wasn’t returning my calls. Finally I just camped in the recruiting office until someone would talk to me.”

It was explained to Sipko that she was facing a slim-to-none chance of getting back in. She learned that the downturn of the economy had led many folks to seek re-entry into active duty, and that the majority of prior service candidates were being disqualified left and right for reasons varying from personal debt to medical problems. Recruiters were growing discouraged with the amount of waivers and paperwork they were submitting for returning veterans, only to have their packages denied.

“At that point, I turned to the labor pool,” said Sipko. “If you’re not familiar with day labor, consider yourself blessed. It’s hard, thankless work. I would get up at 4 a.m., get in line at the dispatching office by 5 a.m., and they would open the window at 7. If there was enough work for all the people in line, or if I had secured a good enough position near the front of the line, I would go out and lay sod in the hot Florida sun, or clean up home construction sites, or whatever local contractors needed for \$6.79 per hour. Many days there wasn’t enough work for everyone, or the weather wasn’t favorable, so after two to three hours of waiting around the labor hall we’d be told to try back the next day.”



Sipko on her “Blue Nose Flight” over the Arctic Circle in 1999.

The inconsistency and fluctuation of the labor pool led to the eventual loss of her house and car. It just wasn’t steady enough for her to sustain her household, she said. Prior to losing the house, her finances had gotten so bad that she had to choose between electricity and propane. She said she needed the computer so she could continue to look for work, so she let the gas run out. That meant two months of no cooking on the gas stove, no drying clothes in the gas dryer, and no hot water from the gas-fueled water heater.

And then rock bottom. Sipko was homeless.

“I was fortunate to only be homeless for one day,” said Sipko. “A friend from church and her young daughter bunked together in order to make room for me and my two cats.”

What was supposed to be a short, few weeks stay ended up being a 10-month living situation while Sipko tried to re-enter active service.

“I had initially presumed I could just go back into the Navy as an AT1, like I was at separation,” said Sipko. “But none of the aviation ratings needed any more E-6s. So I was told to pick a rating that is undermanned at the E-5/E-6 level. The Crypto Technician Interpretive community manager agreed to take me, but only as an E-5, and I would have to be an E-3 during initial training. I was happy to have a job offer, and E-3 pays more than day labor so I gladly accepted.”

Sipko re-entered the military in January of ’09 and has dedicated herself to teaching others about maximizing their opportunities, both in their Navy careers and in preparation for civilian life.

“Not two months ago I would have been completely satisfied with finishing my contract and writing off the Navy entirely, said Petty Officer 3rd Class Patrick Gengler. “When I talked with Sipko and an Ensign that I work with, it got me thinking about furthering my career as an officer. I have begun my application process to the Naval Academy.”

In addition to that, she is steering clear of negative people who just complain about how bad they think they have it in the Navy, she said.

“I work with Sipko every day and if she isn’t getting on my case to get my PQS done or to finish my GMTs; she is motivating me to stay positive in my work,” said Gengler.

Even now Sipko is dealing with the challenge of re-earning her time in rate back in order to be eligible for E-6, all under the new umbrella of Perform to Serve, which threatens to separate her from the Navy before she even has a chance to get her footing.

“Sipko has lived an extraordinary life,” said Gengler. “From growing up in a broken home to leaving the Navy; from helping the needy to ending up in need herself. She has changed her situation, taken command of her life and has gotten back on her feet all by herself. It is a triumph and a testament to the type of person she is, and I respect her greatly.”

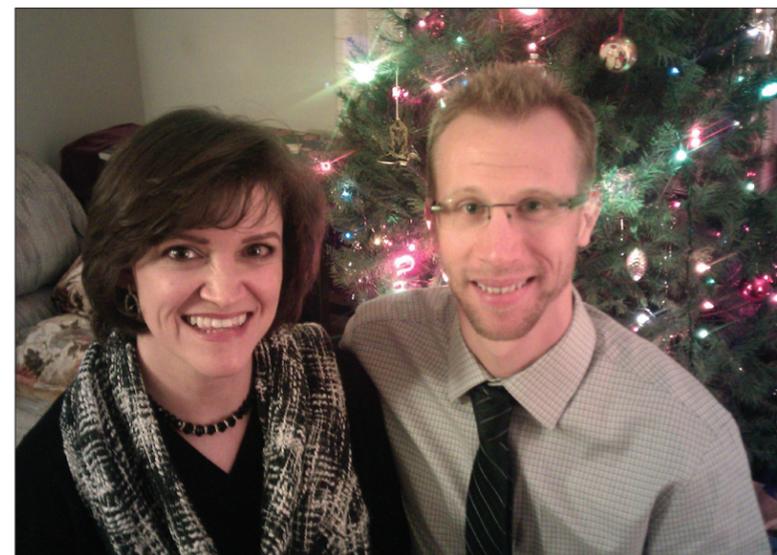
“If anyone has a reason to feel discouraged, it’s me,” said Sipko. “But that is not my message. I’m considering a commission and using my story to encourage other people in their situations and challenges. I hope to be a positive influence to my shipmates and friends. I never felt like I failed as a civilian and had to come crawling back to the Navy. No way! I was simply coming home.”

Top: Sipko with her husband at home on leave in during the holidays.

Middle: Graduating ACLP for the second time in 2011.

Bottom: Sipko after she was frocked to petty officer second class while stationed in Iceland in 1999.

The long road home



NIOC Maryland Sailors Stand Up and Step Forward



Petty Officer 2nd Class Regina Wilken hands out flowers for the students at Severn Elementary to plant during their environmental Field Day, April 2011.



Petty Officer 1st Class Melia Moses high-five's a WWII veteran arriving at Baltimore-Washington International Airport during an Honor Flight event, Sept. 2011.

The volunteer program at Navy Information Operations Command Maryland won three awards from the Naval District Washington recently for their work in the community.

This is the second year that NIOC has entered the flagship competition and the second year they have taken home awards.

In 2010 NIOC won the Community Service Program of the Year Award, Large Shore Command, in Campaign Drug Free; Project Good Neighbor; and Health, Safety and Fitness. This year the command won the Navy Community Service Program of the Year Award for Personal Excellence Partnership; Campaign Drug Free, and Health, Safety and Fitness. Both years the command advanced to compete nation-wide for the USS Bainbridge Award. The results for this year are still pending.

NIOC is currently partnered with 10 schools not including the additional eight schools the Saturday Scholars program covers. Saturday Scholars is a tutoring program for kids struggling with confidence in math and English.

“We infuse our Sailors into local schools to mentor, read or to be a library assistant, lunch assistant or office assistant,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Regina Wilken, the deputy volunteer coordinator. “We provide help in any area where the teacher/student ratio becomes overbearing.”

There are five flagships at NIOC: Personal Excellence Partnership, which strives for excellence in developing the youth of the surrounding communities by promoting academic achievement, and civic responsibility; Project Good Neighbor, which

serves as the basis for developing a good relationship with the surrounding community; Environmental Stewardship, which joins forces with the community and other military commands in educating the youth and community in how to preserve, protect, restore and enhance the environment; Health, Safety, and Fitness, which promotes healthy and fit lifestyles to military members as well as the surrounding civilian community; and Campaign Drug Free, which focuses its efforts on educating the surrounding communities and schools on the dangers of drugs and substance abuse.

Earlier this year NIOC Maryland was awarded the Naval District Washington, Plate Stepper Award, for rescuing a DC volunteer project that didn't have adequate support.

The goal of NIOC's volunteer program is to promote volunteerism and community service to assist in the education and enrichment of the nation's youth and communities and in revitalizing the community.

“There are so many children, businesses, and other programs out there that really need our help, and most that run solely on volunteers,” said Wilken. “Our Sailors build a connection and a relationship with these kids. The same with our Sailors who volunteer at homeless shelters, just being a positive presence is so appreciated by people.”

Since April 2010, NIOC has tracked over 33,000 hours donated by 2,000 volunteers.



NIOC Maryland Sailors and their families help pick up trash along the Potomac River on Andrew's Air Force Base, April 2011.



Before

The NIOC MD Bachelor Enlisted Quarters has undergone some extensive upgrades recently in order to improve the morale and quality of life of its residents.

The old kitchen was rarely used and the new design allows more convenience during command functions such as Thanksgiving and heritage meals.

Upgrades included new ceiling tiles and lighting, a center island with warming drawers, a small vegetable sink and an eat-around bar. All new cabinetry and granite countertops were installed as well as two dining tables with bench seating. The dishwasher was upgraded as well as two cook tops, a double oven, and an oven microwave combo. A 46" LED Sony television was also added for convenience. A ceramic tile deck was installed for easier upkeep.

"The ranges in the old kitchen were abused and only partially worked," said Chief Petty Officer George Keene, Barracks manager. "The cabinetry was worn and limited. The new upgrades



After

provide a gathering place for the residents."

Since the upgrades more meals have been prepped by residents, said Keene. "It's a good place for them to build on friendships."

2011 was a good year for the barracks. New artwork was hung throughout all passageways, lounges and fitness rooms. New decks were laid in the laundry rooms, lounges and office spaces. New draperies offered a much needed face lift to the day room and stairwells.

There are no upgrades planned for 2012, but there are beautification projects planned such as new decking in the stairwells and painting in the day room.

"We have to work within our budget," said Keene, "but with the BEQ teams and their 'can do' spirit, we are looking forward to the improvements and our contributions to the residents of the building."

Farewell shipmate, friend

Below are excerpts from Petty Officer 3rd Class Charles Ulveling's remembrance speech

"Nick and I had a special bond. I consider him my closest friend. We had a lot of things in common. Stupid movies that we thought were funny for no reason, reading and cycling. We weren't roommates but we spent more time with each other than our respective roommates.

We rode our bikes together. We slowed down for each other if the pace was too fast. Or help put a chain back on if it fell off. This was Nick's whole view on life; always willing to stop and help others.

I've struggled as we all here today probably have with the loss of such a close friend. How long until the hurting ends. Will it ever.

I'm reminded of a line from the Lord of the Rings which I think is relevant here.

I do not believe this darkness will endure, it may seem like the sadness is never ending and it will never completely go away, but through time all things are healed.

I don't remember the last words Nick and I exchanged. I hadn't spoken to him in a few weeks. But once again from the Lord of the Rings I found what I think he would say if he could tell us anything now:

"I would have you smile again, not grieve for those whose times has come you shall live to see these days renewed, no more despair."

Nick always thought of others first and put himself second even though he was second to none.

It's a crime to lose someone as kind and generous as Nick Forrest. There aren't enough tears in the world to express our sadness, he was a son a brother an uncle and a friend. His life affected many people for the better.

He was my friend and I'll miss him."



Meet Chari'

Wife, mother, and your ombudsman



Where are you from?

I am originally from Boise, Idaho. However, after spending most of my husband's Navy career in San Diego, that also feels a lot like home to us.

What is your affiliation with the military?

I am a Navy wife. My husband and I have been married for over 12 years, and he has almost 11 years of service in the Navy. I have had the full Navy experience from boot camp to deployments.

Why did you want to be the Command Ombudsman?

Because of the years of experience, I felt that I might be able to use that information to help other Navy families understand the ins and outs of Navy life. I have a heart for Navy families and the challenges that they face.

What does getting the position mean to you?

This is a big responsibility. The families of NIOC Maryland depend on me to provide them with information and resources and be available to them in times of emergency. I hope that I am able to be a positive influence on their experience here at NIOC Maryland and show them that this command truly cares about them.

What are your goals now that you have been selected?

I want to raise awareness about the existence of the Ombudsman position. At a shore command, many people do not think that there is anything that an Ombudsman can do to help them. In fact, we are here to connect them with any resources they might need, whether it's housing information, school information, or where they can go to get help with employment. If the families have a question about what the Navy can do to help them, I am here to answer those questions. And, in cases of emergency, the Ombudsman should be one of the first phone calls you make for help. The chain of command is here for the families, and the Ombudsman helps make sure that they are informed about the concerns and challenges that they face.

Is there anything else you would like people to know about you?

I am very excited to be your new Ombudsman! Please know that I am here for all of the families, and will work to make NIOC Maryland a place that feels like home for everyone. Please feel free to contact me at OmbudsmanNIOCMD@gmail.com or 301-875-7207. I am available from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and am on call all other times for emergencies.

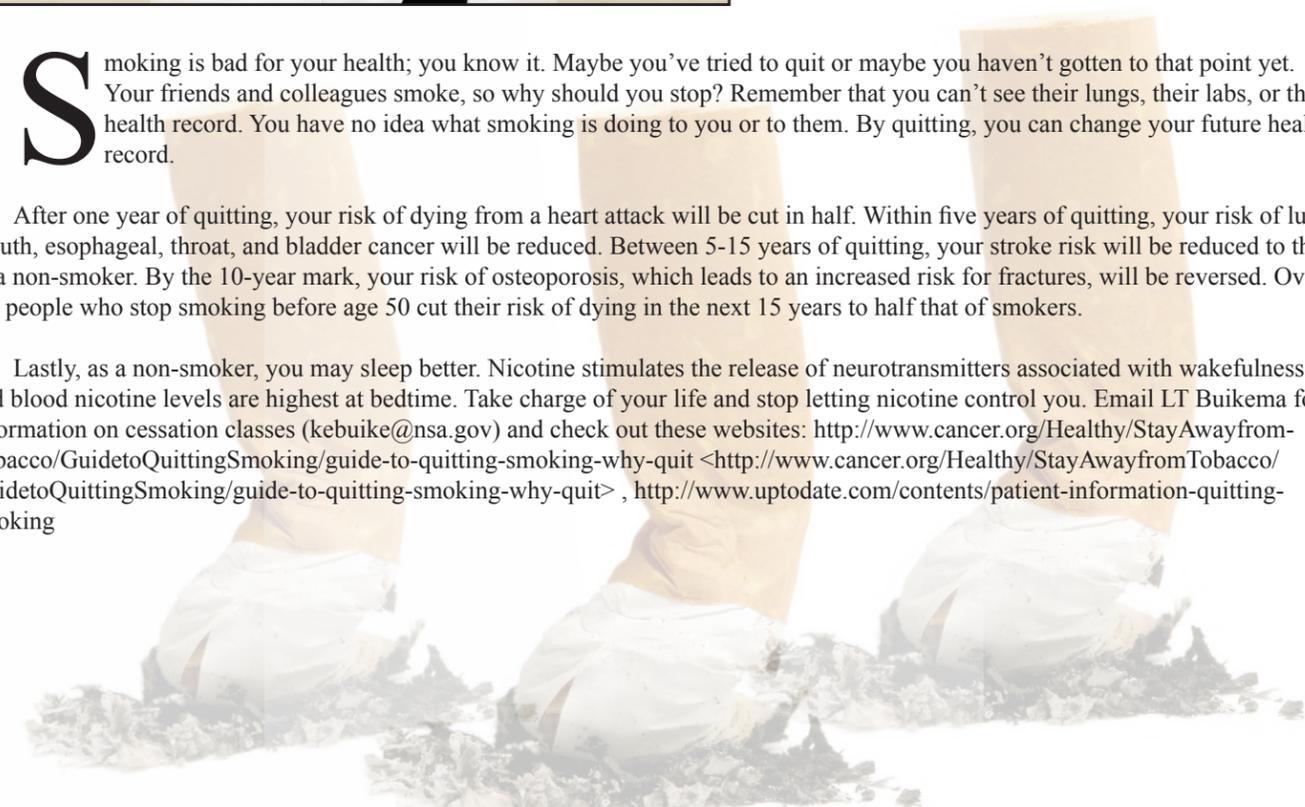


QUIT IN THE NIC'O'TINE

Smoking is bad for your health; you know it. Maybe you've tried to quit or maybe you haven't gotten to that point yet. Your friends and colleagues smoke, so why should you stop? Remember that you can't see their lungs, their labs, or their health record. You have no idea what smoking is doing to you or to them. By quitting, you can change your future health record.

After one year of quitting, your risk of dying from a heart attack will be cut in half. Within five years of quitting, your risk of lung, mouth, esophageal, throat, and bladder cancer will be reduced. Between 5-15 years of quitting, your stroke risk will be reduced to that of a non-smoker. By the 10-year mark, your risk of osteoporosis, which leads to an increased risk for fractures, will be reversed. Overall, people who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years to half that of smokers.

Lastly, as a non-smoker, you may sleep better. Nicotine stimulates the release of neurotransmitters associated with wakefulness and blood nicotine levels are highest at bedtime. Take charge of your life and stop letting nicotine control you. Email LT Buikema for information on cessation classes (kebuike@nsa.gov) and check out these websites: <http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/StayAwayfromTobacco/GuidetoQuittingSmoking/guide-to-quitting-smoking-why-quit> <<http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/StayAwayfromTobacco/GuidetoQuittingSmoking/guide-to-quitting-smoking-why-quit>> , <http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-quitting-smoking>



The word Ombudsman originated in Scandinavian countries and referred to safeguarding the rights of citizens.



Valentine's Day Fundraiser

The Navy Day Ball and Command Social Fundraising Committees will be selling chocolate covered strawberries and red velvet cupcakes for Valentine's Day.

You have your choice to either pick up your order in the 9803 Day Room or have them delivered to your building. For \$25.00 you can get one dozen chocolate covered strawberries or one dozen red velvet cupcakes. They will be boxed in a professional bakery box that will be Valentine's Day themed.

All orders must be placed by 10 February. Order forms can be turned into PO1 Misty Brown in the 9804 Navy SSO office or emailed to her at misty.brown@navy.mi or [msbrow3 443-479-6100](tel:443-479-6100). Orders can also be emailed to Petty Officer Carrie Broom at [410-854-3706](tel:410-854-3706), carrie.broom@navy.mil or clbroom.