

AWATCH

November/December 2012

INSIDE:

- Santa stops by the NIOC children's holiday party.
- Come dance under the stars in Alice Springs.

WHO IS:
PRINCESS
SLEIA?

1775

CONTENTS

4 Race around the track with Princess Sleia

8 Check in with the command career counselor

10 Can you hack it with the best at the command?

NIOC Maryland Command Master Chief Alicia Barnes, Executive Officer Cdr. Rachel Velasco-Lind, and Lt. Kathryn Buikema during a recent trip to Alice Springs, Australia.



Staff
 Commanding Officer
 Capt. T.J. White
 Executive Officer
 Cmdr. Rachel Velasco-Lind
 Command Master Chief
 CDMCMC(SW/AW) Alicia Barnes
 Public Affairs Officer
 Terrina Weatherspoon
 Managing Editor/Layout and Design
 MC2(SW) Regina Wilken
 Command Photographer
 MC2(SW) Regina Wilken
 MC3 Matthew Jordan

ANCHOR WATCH
 In its 38th year of production
 March/April 2012
 www.niocmd.navy.mil
 The "Anchor Watch" is produced by Navy Information Operations Command Maryland. Opinions are not necessarily those of the Navy Department nor the U.S. Government. We reserve the right to correct, edit and omit material. Photos are official U.S. Navy unless otherwise indicated.
 Story ideas are due the first working day of each month to the Public Affairs Office, Bldg. 9804, Rm. 110, Fort Meade, Md. 20755-5290.
 Phone: 301-677-0860 FAX: 301-677-0399.
 Story ideas are also accepted electronically at regina.wilken@navy.mil

CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY PARTY

Navy Information Operations Command Maryland hosted a Children's Holiday Party at a Fort Meade community center Dec. 11.

Fifty children attended the party, which included food and drinks, arts and crafts tables, gifts for the children and a visit with Santa Claus.

Coordinating for this party was a command effort. The planning committee was made up of Petty Officer 1st Class Heather Burns, Petty Officer 1st Class Willie Suhre, Petty Officer 1st Class Melissa Caban, Petty Officer 1st Class Natalie Hammond, Petty Officer 1st Class Micala Troeger and about 30 other command members. The planning committee also got help from the command choir, who sang at the event, the ceremonial honor guard, who helped wrap gifts and the First Class Petty Officers Association, who paid for the event.

Several other people helped out in order to make the event successful. Karol Yox from the Fleet and Family Support Center donated a box of 80 gifts and NIOC leadership donated a few gifts as well.

Santa, who sat for pictures and listened to the children's holiday wishes, paid a special visit.

"The kids were very engaged with the crafts," said Burns. "They looked like they were having fun making their snowflakes and reindeer candy canes. The line to talk to Santa took nearly an hour."

Parents said they were appreciative of the event, saying that they really enjoyed it, said Burns.

"I would just like to thank everyone in the command for their participation," said Burns. "It was amazing that everyone was able to make time to come together and make this happen."



Top: Members from the FCPOA help some of the kids out at the craft table.

Right: Santa mimics Taylor Hall's emotions in hopes of smoothing things out with the youngster.

The reason for the season

Ten Chief Petty Officers from Navy Information Operations Command Maryland volunteered Dec. 7 to help with the Orchard Ridge Project, a Habitat for Humanity project.

Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization building simple, decent, affordable housing in partnership with people in need.

"I figured, what better way to spend Pearl Harbor Day than performing community service with your sisters and brothers," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Katherine Youngblood.

The purpose of this project was to not only benefit people in need, but to get Chiefs, both active and retired, involved in the community on a more frequent basis.

"I feel knowing that we helped someone, helped a family, have a home that they can be proud of and that will keep them safe and comfortable," said Youngblood. "We are looking into future dates and plan to continue to volunteer. It provides a sense of pride in all of us."



Team works to honor Veterans



The Honor Flight Network flies in WWII veterans to see their memorial each Saturday and some weekdays. Some flights are chartered and can have over 100 WWII veterans arriving at once.

Navy Information Operations Command Maryland realizes how important this program is. Honor Flight falls under the Project Good Neighbor flagship, which recently took home the Navy Community Service Program of the Year Award as the large shore command regional winner.

Recently Petty Officer Matthew Maki decided to organize an honor flight for his division, N53. He said he felt the experience would be both humbling and rewarding.

"The surprise and appreciation of the vets when they come off the jetway to applause and a greeting line of service members just makes you feel good about what you're doing by being there," said Maki. "Honoring the sacrifices these men made back in WWII and in Vietnam is the least we can do."

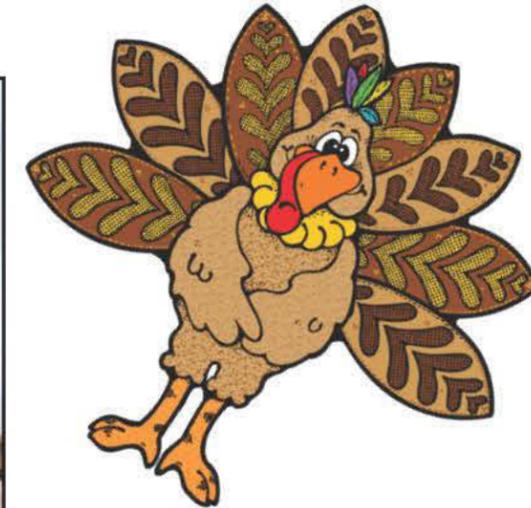
Another added benefit to this program is that service members get a chance to talk to the vets before they board the bus headed for D.C.

"The vets flock to you and want to tell you about their 'sea stories' and they want to hear about what you do and all about the ships you've been on," said Maki.

"I've talked to a former sonar technician that had been on a submarine in the Atlantic. They were dodging depth charges by what they believed to be a Soviet ship," said Maki.

"I've talked to a former gunner's mate that was one of three guys manning a 3-gun turret shooting at Japanese airplanes while his ship was under attack. He actually got tears in his eyes as he continued with his story; that the two other sailors that were manning the turret, sitting right next to him, were shot and killed by one of the Japanese planes as it took another pass at the ship. I've talk to an Army infantryman who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and he very vividly remembers being in the trenches, the terrible conditions, lack of supplies, etc., and how he's lucky to be alive because of all the people around him that didn't make it."

Maki got the idea of getting his division together because he said it was a good way of doing something as a 'team,' which doesn't happen very often because of their different work schedules and commitments.



Turkey Time!!!



Navy Information Operations Command Maryland hosted a Thanksgiving dinner at the barracks Nov. 22. Barracks members, families and guests were invited to attend.

Members of the Chiefs' Mess donated food items and volunteered to prepare the meal. The meal included: Savory Baked Chicken, Roasted and Fried Turkeys, Virginia Baked Ham, Buttered Whipped Potatoes, Candied Sweet Potatoes, Savory Bread Dressing, Baked Macaroni and Cheese, Simmered Corn, Seasoned Fresh Green Beans, Turkey Gravy, Cranberry Sauce, Hot Dinner Rolls, Salad and Fresh Fruits, Pasta Salad, Cheese and Cracker Trays, Potato Salad, Vegetable Trays, Assorted Desserts, Pumpkin Pies, Apple Pies, Sweet Potato Pies, Pecan Pie, Assorted Cakes, Assorted Beverages, Egg Nog, Coffee, Tea, Milk and Sodas.

Simpson, playing the position of the jammer, breaks out in front of the pack in hopes of scoring points.



Story by Terrina Weatherspoon
Images provided by Joshua M. Hoover

GET DOWN AND DERBY

with

CHIEF CHRISTINA SIMPSON

DOWN AND DERBY

Brittany Smears, Smashing Pumpkin, Lil' Diablo, Lady Hacksaw. These are not the latest pop stars; instead these are typical Derby Girl nicknames. With upward of 700 people staring at you, and the announcer calling out names one by one, it is important to be remembered, and a great name is the best way to do that.

Chief Christina Simpson is what the derby world considers, "Fresh Meat." She is at the very beginning of her career, but already knows how much power a great name can hold.

So she chose Princess Sleia. Brilliant.

"A lot goes into choosing a name," said Simpson. "But this just felt right – it was the perfect way to merge two things I love."

Star Wars and roller-skating.

"My whole life I've been skating. It is freeing. It is my getaway. And this is a chance to continue doing something I love."

Once Simpson was made aware of the opportunity of becoming a derby girl, she was already on her way to donning her skates.

"During indoctrination one day a Sailor mentioned that he was a roller derby ref. This peaked my interest. I started doing research. I found out that they were holding boot camps in D.C., so I signed up."

Boot camp was 10 weeks, one day a week. Simpson showed up each week more excited than the week before – until she finished. Then she was hit with a bomb. Making it through boot camp and the workshops once a week wasn't easy, but it was

doable. But the commitment they wanted was too much – not to mention the drive is 1.5 hours from her home. It just wasn't going to be possible with her Navy schedule to be able to fully commit to the team.

But then some girls told her about a league in southern Maryland. She sent some emails and went through yet another boot camp. She learned more drills and ultimately passed the assessment.

"It is a new league and they were also very adamant about commitment. They will not allow you to miss practices. Currently there are only four regular skaters and two girls run it," said Simpson. "They don't just want someone interested in the cool parts of being of Derby Girl. They need people who are committed to all that the process entails."

And that is a lot. Roller derby is a business. Teams are responsible for doing their own marketing, training and public affairs, and getting their own sponsors and matches.

Simpson is all in.

In December she participated in Season's Beatings – a mash up of talent from the East Coast.

"We were put onto random teams depending on our skill level. Then we bout against random other teams of our same skill level. It was a great way to test our skills."

Simpson is excited about this opportunity to socialize with a group of people outside of the military.

"I'm getting ready to retire. And I've been wondering if my ship had sailed. But this is my chance to do something different. And my kids see me practice, they see my dedication and they see the win/lose and the team spirit."

Simpson also sees this as an opportunity to make more female friends.

"It's a sisterhood. I've made a lot of male friends in the Navy. This was a chance for me to make more female friends. An all female, full contact sport – it's empowering."



★ Simpson waits for the second whistle releasing the jammers. Once jammers are released, they have to break through the "pack" which is a mix of both team's blockers.



★ Simpson, playing the position of pivot, organizes her blockers into a wall to block the other team's jammer, while letting her team's jammer through the pack.



★ Simpson laughs with teammates during a break in her bouts.

Q+A

Career Counselor Corner: NCC Tim Hawkins

You came from a ship. What is the biggest difference you can see coming to NIOC?

On a ship everything and everyone is in one centralized area but here there are Sailors scattered in different states and countries.

What are you hoping to accomplish here and do you have a certain timeline?

Our main goal is to ensure each Sailor is provided accurate and timely career related information to make accurate and timely career related decisions.

What are your goals when it comes to NIOC Sailors?

The goal of our office is to take care of Sailors with a cradle-to-grave mentality. Each of our Sailors should have the opportunity to decide whether to 'Stay Navy' and if they decide to transition out of the Navy; transition with a plan and transition smoothly.

What are the biggest programs you seeing so far?

Perform to Serve (PTS) and Career Development Boards (CDBs) will be our primary focus. Those programs are closely tied to each other and need to be taken very seriously. All of our Sailors deserve the opportunity to have control of their careers, but in order to do that they need to understand their career and all the options available for upward mobility.

What will your biggest challenge be here?

The biggest challenge is keeping up with a constantly changing Navy. I am fortunate in that I came from a very large platform but the working hours, security and location of our Sailors will pose challenges. However, I have the foundation of a phenomenal Career Development Team, which will allow our program to have an imprint and pulse check on each of our Sailors.



PTS Need to Know:

Starting December 1st there will only be one PTS application accepted. You can contact the career counselor office for specifics. There is a second page added to the application. This will serve as a statement of understanding for the service member. This will ensure that each Sailor that completes a PTS application will know exactly what they are inputting on their application. Each Department/Division counselor is to maintain a copy of each PTS application for two years and the Command Career Counselor will maintain the original.

- PTS due list (Initial Action Required) will be disseminated to CPOs/PO1s/ CC's the first week of each month
- Each Initial Action Required application will be inputted into Fleet RIDE by the 15th of each month
- All Dept /Div CC's will have Fleet RIDE access to input their Sailors applications Completed SAAR forms will be turned into me so I can set-up the counselors access.
- In Fleet RIDE the Dept/Div CC's will only have the option to submit applications to the Command CC and we will complete the final submission after verifying accuracy. All Dept/Div CC's will receive training on Fleet RIDE prior to submitting any applications.
- PTS results will be disseminated the day they are released (around 15th of each month) and CDBs will be required on 3X PTS roll-overs (Sailors that have only three reviews remaining) and Sailors that receive a Denied-Final Active status (required to separate at EAOS). CDB minutes will be turned into the Command Career Counselor office for retain and NSIPS input.

Below are the links to Fleet RIDE and CC PTS page on NPC that provide a wealth of information.
<http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/career/careercounseling/Pages/FleetRIDE-PTS.aspx>
<https://fleetride.sscno.nmci.navy.mil/>

CHANCE TO JIVE UNDER THE SAILS

By Cameron Boon / Alice Live

Dante Basford, the son of Senior Chief Laveda Basford, Senior Enlisted Leader for Joint Defense Facility, Pine Gap in Alice Springs, takes his dancing to the streets.



After the roaring success of the first Dancing in the Streets at the launch of the Alice Desert Festival, Dante Basford will be taking a groovier road this time.

The dance teacher will be demonstrating to the people of Alice Springs how to jive, under the Todd Mall sails this afternoon.

"Jive has a lot of energy and there's a lot of high knees," said Basford. "A lot of people feel like they have to run to keep up, but if you bounce your way through, it's a lot easier. I wouldn't encourage wearing high heels."

Dante discovered his passion for dancing as a boy in America.

"I actually started dancing in a mall in Chicago when I was nine years old. I danced mostly for competition and performance," he said.

"When I first started I absolutely loved it. Dancing was so different from anything I'd ever done before. I stopped when I was 16 because I didn't have a dance partner. It wasn't until after I got to Alice Springs that I started dancing again. Some local dancers encouraged me."

While he dances contemporary, hip-hop and other styles, Dante likes to focus on ballroom.

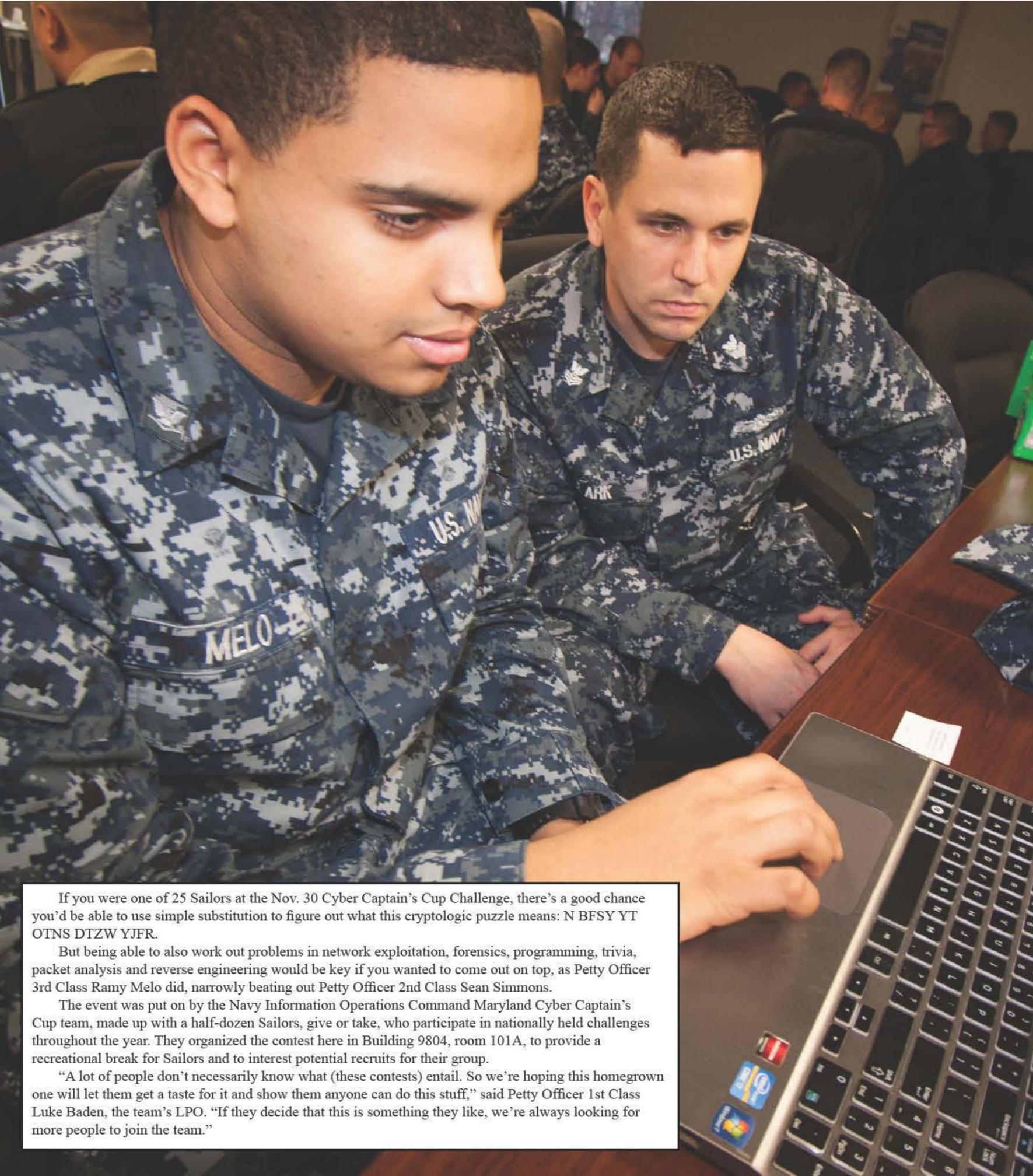
"I dance ballroom and Latin ballroom. There are five dances in Latin ballroom – samba, rumba, cha-cha, paso and jive.

"Standard ballroom has waltz, tango and quick-step. When I first arrived in Alice, there wasn't any ballroom being taught, so I took up salsa."

Dante said he was encouraged by the Alice Springs dancers Sila Crosley and Melissa Keri to continue with the ballroom dancing.

"Alice Springs helped me get my passion back for doing what I love. It was very weird because I came here thinking 'no, no, no' and that there wouldn't be anything here, but it was a good change because I've started taking classes and teaching again."

Dante's favorite style of dance is samba. "It's all about shaking what you got," he said. "Samba is all about having fun."



Can't hack it?

Rounded skillset key to unlocking challenges

By Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew R. Schwarz, 10 Department

If you were one of 25 Sailors at the Nov. 30 Cyber Captain's Cup Challenge, there's a good chance you'd be able to use simple substitution to figure out what this cryptologic puzzle means: N BFSY YT OTNS DTZW YJFR.

But being able to also work out problems in network exploitation, forensics, programming, trivia, packet analysis and reverse engineering would be key if you wanted to come out on top, as Petty Officer 3rd Class Ramy Melo did, narrowly beating out Petty Officer 2nd Class Sean Simmons.

The event was put on by the Navy Information Operations Command Maryland Cyber Captain's Cup team, made up with a half-dozen Sailors, give or take, who participate in nationally held challenges throughout the year. They organized the contest here in Building 9804, room 101A, to provide a recreational break for Sailors and to interest potential recruits for their group.

"A lot of people don't necessarily know what (these contests) entail. So we're hoping this homegrown one will let them get a taste for it and show them anyone can do this stuff," said Petty Officer 1st Class Luke Baden, the team's LPO. "If they decide that this is something they like, we're always looking for more people to join the team."

Competitors could bring their own laptops or use loaners, along with any readily available or open source tools they wanted. Since not everyone has the same skillset, the tasks each Sailor could face varied. As an example, for network exploitation there were servers running vulnerable services and hiding "secret" data, while cryptologic challenges featured encryption and encoding and a goal of finding a secret key.

"While the trivia was fun, I had the most fun with the rock-paper-scissors challenge," said Melo, referring to the programming challenge that clinched him the lead.

It required connecting to a server that automatically responded with one of the three moves from the childhood dispute resolution game. Melo, who claims to not have a lot of scripting experience, used the programming language Perl to defeat the server 50 consecutive times to earn his points.

"Most of the things I'm good at are packet analysis and reverse engineering, but I spent some time on some challenges like that and it really didn't work out," he said. "In challenges like (rock-paper-scissors) you can really get engrossed and not realize how much time you have spent."

All tasks were accessible from an internal web site, where clues, data and files could be downloaded and answers submitted for points. Melo's last-minute jump over Simmons was visible on a leaderboard that was projected at the front of the room, rather than the Selectee Leadership Course slides or indoctrination videos that light up the screens on a normal duty day.

Including Melo and Baden, most participants came from 10 Department, though N3, 60 and 70 had some representation. Senior Chief Joel Brown sees the benefits of events like these as a no-brainer.

"In each department we exercise different technical subsets of our overall rating," said Brown, the 10 Department Chief and CTN Functional Manager. "This environment allows our Sailors to engage in areas outside of their normal day to day jobs, which ultimately makes for a stronger well-rounded Sailor."

Baden said his team is planning to debrief the solutions to all the challenges that participants faced sometime in December. The next national contest they'll enter will be sometime after the New Year. It'll follow the four online competitions they entered this year. The most recent one was held in October by the Polytechnic Institute of New York University. According to Baden, more than 500 teams participated – they placed 30th overall and ninth in their division.

To participate in events like these, contact team LCPO Senior Chief Rob Couey at rtcouey@gmail.com or Baden at lrbaden@nsa.gov. Be sure to pass them the secret phrase (and answer to the cipher at the top): "I WANT TO JOIN YOUR TEAM."

WRNMMC First With Military Birth After Fetal Surgery

by Sharon Renee Taylor
WRNMMC Journal Staff Writer

With the birth of baby Olive Weidenhammer Aug. 2, physicians at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) made military medical history. She was the first baby born in a military treatment facility after undergoing a delicate, life-changing surgery as a fetus in her mother's womb nearly three months earlier in Philadelphia, on May 8.

A tale of two sisters:

"We knew that something was wrong at 17 weeks," said WRNMMC obstetrician Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Scott Petersen, of Petty Officer 3rd Class Elizabeth Weidenhammer's pregnancy. A serum screening test and an ultrasound confirmed it. Weidenhammer's unborn baby had Spina Bifida like her older daughter, Willow. "The overall incidence is 3.5 per 10,000 live births in the U.S. Our patient's rate was 2-3 percent now with two babies it's 10 percent," Petersen said.

The lesion was located at L3-L4 for the fetus, the same as older sister Willow. "They are a cookie cutter of each other," Weidenhammer said. "Olive's ultrasound looked exactly like Willow's. It could definitely be the same child."

After reviewing options with a multidisciplinary team of specialists at WRNMMC, Weidenhammer and her husband, Petty Officer 3rd Class Darren Weidenhammer, decided to seek a delicate operation for their unborn daughter that could offer their baby a very different outcome than older sister Willow, diagnosed with Spina Bifida three years earlier.

In 2008, Weidenhammer was stationed in Puget Sound, Wash., living alone when Willow was diagnosed with Spina Bifida in the womb. Darren was deployed to the Middle East.

"I was overwhelmed," the Sailor said, when doctors told her about the future her unborn daughter could face with the diagnosis: bowel and bladder control



Doctors at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia perform a fetal surgery (courtesy of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia).

issues; foot, leg and hip pain; difficulty walking; vision problems; mental and developmental delays; as well as hydrocephalus, a collection of fluid in the brain that requires a shunt to drain.

The young mother had to choose whether surgeons would close the opening in the L3-L4 region on Willow's back after she was born, or participate in a medical trial at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and two other hospitals that offered a new, experimental surgery on her unborn fetus that could diminish the challenges that lay ahead. Weidenhammer chose not to participate in the trial, and a few months later, Willow was born by Caesarean section at University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle, Wash. She was transferred to the children's clinic and surgeons went to work to repair the myelomeningocele immediately in a more than seven-hour operation that required extensive plastic surgery to close Willow's back. The next day, the infant had shunts placed in her head to relieve the hydrocephalus.

The first year of life was a challenge for Weidenhammer and her infant daughter, but Darren later joined them stateside. Willow endured seven different operations over the next several years and a series of casting that delayed her in walking. She took her first steps this

spring at age 3. Willow uses a walker and wheelchair; she sees a physical therapist twice a week. Weidenhammer said her daughter sees specialists for gastroenterology, orthopedics, urology, neurosurgery and neurology complications from Spina Bifida.

Spina Bifida:

As an embryo develops, the spine and spinal cord first begin flat. Over time as the fetus grows, the spinal column comes to close around the spinal cord, explained Petersen, who serves as chief of maternal-fetal medicine at WRNMMC. In Spina Bifida, closure around the cord doesn't happen all the way, leaving an open gap in the spine.

"It's sort of like a zipper that starts in the middle, goes from top to bottom and closes. There's a problem with the way that it closes," said Army Col. (Dr.) Edward Coll, a developmental pediatrician and chief of the developmental pediatric service, who runs a specialty clinic for patients with Spina Bifida at WRNMMC.

The opening that exposes the spinal cord needs to be closed with surgery. The site of the spinal column and cord separation is often called a "lesion" after surgical repair.

Weidenhammer, now stationed in Maryland, became pregnant again earlier this year. Tests at WRNMMC indicated

their second child also had Spina Bifida. Elizabeth recalled that the phone call with the diagnosis was definitely a surprise. "It was quite disappointing," she said.

Surgeons at CHOP operated on Weidenhammer, to close the opening on the baby's spine.

After six weeks of follow-up care and observation under the CHOP team, the Sailor returned to the care of neonatologists and the maternal-fetal medicine team (high-risk obstetricians) at Walter Reed Bethesda, who maintained constant contact with her as she recovered in Philadelphia.

With fetal surgery in May at CHOP at 22 weeks and five days, Weidenhammer delivered daughter Olive at 34 weeks and five days. The C-section and recovery for mom and baby went well. Walter Reed Bethesda's high-risk obstetricians, Petersen and Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Kimberly Hickey, performed the milestone C-section delivery of baby Olive in August.

"This mother had unique care and unique expertise," explained Dr. N. Scott Adzick, surgeon-in-chief at CHOP. "We worked in partnership with the military for the evaluation of the surgery, for the delivery and for post-natal care."

The surgery:

Adzick explained how the procedure is performed at CHOP.

After a two-day evaluation to determine if both mom and fetus are suitable candidates for the surgery, the operation is performed between 19 and 26 weeks of pregnancy by a multidisciplinary team of surgeons and specialists. The mother is given deep general anesthesia and, during the surgery, the fetus gets an additional intramuscular shot of anesthesia. An incision is placed higher in the uterus than a normal C-section after doctors have determined the location of the baby in the uterus, with precise techniques to repair the baby's myelomeningocele in layers. The uterine and abdominal wounds are then closed with absorbable sutures that will dissolve once the wounds are healed.

The mother runs the risk for several post-operative complications, including rupture of the membranes, uterine infection and scar tissue, as well as preterm labor. "The risk of premature birth, that's the big one," Adzick said.

He explained, prior to the completion

of the 2010 randomized trial that studied prenatal versus postnatal Spina Bifida repair, mothers who received the fetal surgery stayed nearby the specialty hospital for the remainder of their pregnancy because their home hospitals weren't able or didn't have the resources available to support or monitor them.

"You have to have high-risk neonatology and OB teams. You really need to know what you're doing and there's no substitute for experience," Adzick said. After the trial ended, the hospital began to consider whether to allow mothers to return to their home hospital. "It depends on the individual circumstances and experience of the referring clinical team," he added.

The circumstances were right at Walter Reed Bethesda for Weidenhammer, who said she desperately wanted to return to the medical center and her family. After the six weeks of post-op observation had ended, the Sailor was firm on returning to WRNMMC.

Confidence:

"I couldn't have had a better experience, especially with the two hospitals working together. I got to come [home] and just be with the people that I grew close with, and my husband and daughter, who are well worth it," Weidenhammer explained.

"I think we've only had four moms, maybe five moms now who have delivered back at the referring hospital. Most moms stay and deliver with us," explained Dr. Julie S. Moldenhauer, a maternal-fetal medicine reproductive geneticist who serves as the medical director of the Special Delivery Unit at CHOP.

Moldenhauer agreed the small number said a lot about Walter Reed Bethesda: the faith the fetal specialist

had in Petersen and the services provided there. "Absolutely," she said. "This was more than the typical C-section," Moldenhauer said. "For her delivery, Dr. Petersen and his team had to be completely prepared and ready to handle any of the complications that could get thrown their way."

The Amazing Results:

The care they received at Walter Reed Bethesda, their "extremely supportive" respective commands, as well as the results of the 20-minute fetal surgery for baby Olive, and one-and-a-half hour surgery for Weidenhammer, was amazing, they said. Although doctors keep a close eye on Olive, Weidenhammer reports, "we haven't had any issues at all."

Although Willow currently sees a civilian primary care manager, the couple plans to return her care back to WRNMMC.

"I know Bethesda. We've really found that we prefer having both of our girls there," Weidenhammer said. "Just having more family-centered appointments and visits was great for us during the whole pregnancy and afterwards. Everyone did amazing after we had her in keeping the whole family together."

The couple said the decision for fetal surgery was a good one and they encourage more military members to seek prenatal surgery for their children with Spina Bifida. With two daughters, mirror images of the other, born with the same congenital disorder in the same spot on the spine one with surgery in the womb and the other, surgery after birth the couple said there's no doubt that they would make the same decision again. "The benefits are so obvious that we wouldn't think twice about it."



Petty Officers 3rd Class Elizabeth Weidenhammer and Darren Weidenhammer spend time with their daughters Willow, 3, and two-month-old Olive. Both girls were born with Spina Bifida and received surgery for the congenital disorder, each with very different results.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Dont Let Stress Tear You Apart



Graphic Design by MC3 Matthew Jordan

Please contact the Chaplain's office at 301-677-0492 or Fleet and Family Support Center at 301-677-9014 for help with stress management.