



HOME FROM AFGHANISTAN, MARINES REUNITE WITH WOUNDED BROTHERS

Four Marines were awarded Purple Hearts in front of the national Marine Corps Memorial Feb. 16 in Arlington, Va. All from Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, they were wounded at different times throughout their deployment. "We had a job to do. We went over there and did our job, and now we're home," said Sgt. Curt



Bartz, who was awarded two Purple Hearts at the ceremony. "Everybody is proud of us. We know that we did a good job. That's all we can do." While being honored for their service, they also mourned the loss of two of their comrades, Cpl. Phillip D. McGeath and Lance Cpl. Christopher P.J. Levy. In addition to the Purple Heart ceremony, 170 Marines from the unit traveled from Camp Lejeune, N.C., to meet with their fellow Marines who were recuperating at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Capt. Paul Trembaly, commander of the company and who arranged the visit, wanted his Marines "to remember, no matter how hard the times get, or how bad their dreams are, that they are part of a larger prestigious organization that takes care of its own."

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Also watch CNN's report: Marines just back from war in Afghanistan reunite with their injured buddies, CNN's Barbara Starr reports.

HEROES

3RD RECON MARINES REMEMBER THEIR FALLEN

The Marines of 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion honored two fallen comrades during a memorial service on Camp Schwab in Okinawa, Japan, on Feb. 3. Sgt. Daniel D. Gurr was killed in action on Aug. 5, 2011 and Cpl. Adam J. Buyes was killed on Nov. 26, 2011 while both were deployed to Afghanistan. "Sgt. Gurr and Cpl. Buyes will never be forgotten by those who served with them and by their loving families. Their

loss will leave a space that cannot be filled," said Brig. Gen. Frederick M. Padilla, commanding general, 3rd Marine Division. "We may, however, take some small measure of comfort in knowing that they lived their lives as men of action and as President Ronald Reagan said, 'they made a difference.'" As part of the memorial service, Gurr's family received his Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Combat Distinguishing device and Buye's family accepted his Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. Although the unit lost their comrades while deployed, they waited until they completed their mission and returned home before honoring the lives of Gurr and Buyes.

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EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL TECHNICIANS EARN BRONZE STARS FOR HEROISM

Staff Sgts. David J. Dignan and James D. Whidden, both with explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) Company, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (MLG), were awarded the Bronze Star with a Combat Distinguishing Device in support of International Security Assistance Force operations from April to September



2011. The two Marines were honored in a ceremony aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., on Feb 10. "You guys do incredibly brave stuff [on your deployments], but it comes with a cost. We all know what the cost is," said Col. Mark R. Hollahan, the 2nd MLG commanding officer, who presented the awards to the Marines. "Let us never forget all those wounded warriors who are still paying the cost and the ones who paid the ultimate sacrifice." Dignan, who was deployed to Helmand province, Afghanistan, responded to a group of Marines and Sailors who had been ambushed and were prevented from taking cover by a road side bomb. In light of trying circumstances, he removed the threat and set up an explosive breaching charge to help the unit enter a suspected enemy compound, all while exposed to enemy fire. Modeling similar bravery, Whidden was with a patrol that found an improvised explosive device inside a compound. After he entered the small space, Whidden found himself in the middle of a mine field with anti-tamper switches, yet he was able to rely on prior training and defuse each of the five devices. Hollahan thanked the EOD Marines who had received the awards, as well as all the other EODs present.



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WOUNDED WARRIORS STRIVE FOR GLORY AT 2012 MARINE CORPS TRIALS

On Feb. 16, injured Marines, veterans and other service members kicked off the competitions at the 2012 Marine Corps Trials on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. The overall top 50 Marines will earn the opportunity to represent the Corps and compete in the Wounded Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo., in May. Some Marines even hope to go further and land a spot on the All-Marine Team or compete with the Paralympic Team. "There's more to life than the injury,"



said Lance Cpl. Samantha Gaona, a cancer survivor and first-time Trials participant. "A lot of people think they can't do it anymore, the trials help us know we still have a lot in us." The Trials, which continued through Feb. 22, were part of the Wounded Warrior Regiments' Warrior Athlete Reconditioning Program, which gives Marines the opportunity to participate in physical activities outside of standard rehabilitation therapy.

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WOUNDED BODY, WARRIOR SPIRIT: SGT. MAJ. RAYMOND MACKEY

While deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 with 3rd Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, Sgt. Maj. Raymond Mackey lost both of his legs after an improvised explosive device detonated as his patrol was under fire. The 29-year veteran of the Corps began mentoring and inspiring other wounded warriors while he was recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Mackey participated in wheelchair basketball in the 2012 Marine Corps Trials with the same injured Marines he mentored and encouraged. "You never quit being a Marine. I'm hoping to somehow still help Marines," said Mackey. "It doesn't matter what I'm doing because Marines are Marines. Sometimes they need help and sometimes they need guidance. Somehow, I'll help Marines...whether it's inspiring them or helping them buy cars and simple things like that."

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WOUNDED BODY, WARRIOR SPIRIT: CPL. JOSUE BARRON



His body may show the outward effects of the war, but his attitude also portrays the battle-learned ethics of commitment to one's brothers. While serving in Afghanistan a year and a half ago, Cpl. Josue Barron lost his left leg and left eye in an improvised explosive device blast. Yet since his injuries, his commitment to his brothers of the "Dark Horse Battalion" (3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment) has only grown stronger. "I'm proud to say I was with 3/5. It



means a lot. There are a lot of tough guys in 3/5 and they trained us well. I lost a lot of

friends, but for all of them, it was worth it. I'm proud of where I come from," he said. As he competed against other Wounded Warriors in the 2012 Marine Corps Trials this week, Barron's prosthetic eye and leg proudly bare the 3/5 insignia. "I thought I was going to be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life because I had no idea they had high-tech prosthetics and stuff like that," he said. "I took shrapnel to my right eye, too. I was blind for the first two months and I thought I was never going to see. I never thought I would be where I am right now: playing wheelchair basketball and being independent." Optimistic for the future, he hoped to do well in the hand-crank bicycling and wheelchair basketball events.

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WOUNDED BODY, WARRIOR SPIRIT: CPL. ANTHONY MCDANIEL

In August 2010, Cpl. Anthony McDaniel was deployed as an artilleryman in Kajaki, Afghanistan, and while out on the patrol, an improvised explosive device detonated nearby, causing him to lose both legs and his left hand. Yet as McDaniel prepared to compete against other Wounded Warriors in the 2012 Marine Corps Trials earlier this week, the injuries were just the beginning of a new exciting journey. "I might have a left wrist amputation and a bilateral amputation, but it's still not going to stop me from doing



what I want to do. You don't look at yourself as wounded or disabled, but at the things you can do," he said. He competed in team wheelchair basketball and hand-crank cycling. "Just because you got injured, your life doesn't have to stop. You may not be able to do the exact things you used to, but you can do similar things, and have a lot of fun doing it." In the future, he hopes to continue to gain speed and skill with his prosthetic legs in hopes of eventually competing in track and field events.

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CHERRY POINT MARINE PULLS MAN FROM TRUCK ENGULFED IN FLAMES

It was fortunate that Lance Cpl. David S. Shouse was running late to pick up his new fishing boat on Feb. 14. As he was driving through Boiling Springs, N.C., he spotted a truck engulfed in flames on the side of the road. The Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., supply clerk pulled over to see if he could provide assistance, and saw 59-year-old Steven Early stuck inside the vehicle. "I was going to call 911 right away, but then I saw him," said Shouse. "The only thing going through my mind when I saw him was, 'There's a guy in that truck and I have to get him out.'" Shouse grabbed Early and pulled him a safe distance from the fire. Two days after the rescue, Shouse's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Samuel P. Mowery, commended his selflessness. "Your actions outside the work place are indicative of what you do in the work place," said Mowery.

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NEWS

AFGHAN FORCES, MARINES MEET LOCALS, DRIVE BACK INSURGENCY IN SANGIN



As part of Operation Southern Disrupt, Afghan soldiers from the Afghan National Army (ANA) 4th Tolai, 2nd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, and Marines from Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment searched for insurgent activity and met with locals in Reygion and De Kahkesh Karez, in Sangin province, Afghanistan. With the increased presence of the ANA and coalition forces, insurgents have moved to the borders of these villages to regroup, plan operations and build improvised explosive devices. "Getting out

there takes away enemy freedom of movement, denies the enemy safe haven and sanctuary and, with luck, will offer the interdiction of enemy cache locations," said Capt. David T. Russell, Weapons Company commander. The two-day operation put the ANA soldiers in the lead while searching for insurgent activity, and the mission also put coalition forces face-to-face with villagers while taking census information and garnering support. Female Engagement Team 6 assisted the forces in speaking with local women. As the mission went on, the partnered forces were able to compile valuable information about the residents of the area and foster a positive relationship with them.

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COMMANDANT OF COLOMBIAN MARINE CORPS AWARDS U.S. MARINES

U.S. Marines Sgt. Maj. William F. Fitzgerald III and Master Gunnery Sgt. Ramon Reyes received the Distinguished Service Medal, Colombia's highest award that can be bestowed upon foreign nationals, during a ceremony at the Batallón de Seguridad de Infantería de Marina (BASEGIM), the Colombian Marine Corps' (COLMAR) Security Battalion Headquarters Base in Bogota, Colombia. "This award is very well deserved for the outstanding support that these Marines have dedicated to the



development of the Colombian Marine Corps NCO Corps," said Brigadier General Luis Gomez Vasquez, Commandant of the Colombian Marine Corps, who presented the award to the two Marines. The Distinguished Service Medal is the oldest medal and the only medal in the COLMAR given to military members, civilians and foreigners that have gone above and beyond in support of the Colombian Marine Corps. "Sgt. Maj. Fitzgerald and Master Gunnery Sgt. Reyes have demonstrated tremendous dedication by helping the COLMAR develop its NCO and Sergeants Corps and build strong relationships as partners working together with common goals of theater security," said Maj. Gen. John M. Croley, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South.

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MARINES SHARE COMBAT EXPERIENCE WITH GEORGIAN COUNTERPARTS

Marines are mentoring Georgian Soldiers from Delta Company, 23rd Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) and preparing them for an upcoming deployment to Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations in support of the Georgia Deployment Program — International Security Assistance Force. "Our intention is to give the Georgians soldiers the essential training and preparation to operate with Marines and the Afghan National Army in stabilizing the security environment in



Afghanistan," said Lt. Col. Christopher Brown, officer-in-charge of the rehearsal exercise. "This mission rehearsal exercise (MRE) has been designed to replicate the Regional Command (Southwest) area of operations and provide a scenario that evaluates the 23rd Georgian Light Infantry Battalion's ability to operate within a counter-insurgency environment." The MRE ran from Feb. 1-24 and takes place at Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany. The Georgian Soldiers patrol the JMRC, seeking insurgents, weapons and improvised explosive device materials with simulated Afghan partner forces and meeting with Afghan civilian role players.

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MARINE FIGHTING FOR KIDS AT RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

After being known as Marine Staff Sgt. Don Smith for more than a decade, he is now simply known as "Mr. Don" around the Ronald McDonald house where he works. The former weapons platoon sergeant spent 10 years in the Marine Corps before working at the Ronald McDonald house as a facilities manager. During his service in the Corps, Smith was a marksmanship instructor who was in charge of 35 other Marines, armed with grenade launchers, mortars and machine guns. Even now after he dresses for work each day in civilian attire, the lessons learned as a Marine have carried



over in his daily work at the Ronald McDonald House. "If you do what I do every day, you'll never work a day in your life. It's not work, it's service, and I love it," Smith said. Part of his daily responsibilities include making sure the contractors, vendors, maintenance crews and housekeepers get the job done right — which then ensures that the families visiting the Ronald McDonald House have one less thing to worry about. "I get to come out here and make sure that these families have everything they need," he said.

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AMERICA'S BATTALION SPOUSES GET A TASTE OF THE CORPS

Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, hosted a "Jane Wayne Day" on Feb. 15 for the spouses of Marines on the base. The event built camaraderie among the spouses and gave them a firsthand look into what Marines experience daily as part of their job, said Cheryl Chiu, the family readiness officer for 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines. "You just hear him talk about [his job], but you will never truly understand until you walk in his shoes," said participant Renee Rojas, who has been married to a Marine for a year. The participants first received instruction in "drill," learning how to



stand in formation and carry a weapon. They also met with Marine Corps Martial Arts Program instructors and got the chance to learn how to shoot weapons at the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer. Other Jane Wayne Day training included a modified Combat Fitness Test and the Combat Convoy Simulator. "To be a Marine, you have to be mentally tough," said participant Katie Boyce. "It takes a special breed to want to be a part of this."

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THANK YOU

MARINE CORPS SCHOLARSHIP FOR SON HELPS EASE GRIEF FOR CALIFORNIA WIDOW

Capt. Phillip G. Chapman was killed in 1991 in a helicopter crash during a routine training mission while stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., leaving behind his wife and three-year-old son. Twenty years later, now 23-year-old Sean Chapman has chosen to pursue opera singing with support from the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation. For the third year in a row, Chapman will receive a Heroes Tribute Scholarship Award on Feb. 27. "That scholarship money has been tremendously important to us, and we're so appreciative, but equally important to Sean and I is that this foundation is a group of U.S. Marines and their families," his mother, Theresa Chapman said. "It's like a brotherhood, a family that we're still connected to. That means a lot because, for us, it's also a connection we still have with Phil."

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EVENTS

MILITARY DISCOUNT REGISTER MARINE CORPS MARATHON



Beginning Feb. 23, all active duty or Reserves military members can receive a 15 percent savings upon registering for the 37th Marine Corps Marathon (MCM). The



registration fee is \$78.20 until the discount ends on March 6, after which it will increase to \$92. Public registration opens on March 7. The 2012 MCM will be held on Sunday, Oct. 28 in Northern Virginia and through Washington, D.C. More information is available at www.marinemarathon.com.

