



# 1st Battalion 24th Marines Family Readiness Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue I

Spring 2012

1st Battalion  
24th Marines

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Michigan 48045  
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## 1/24 Family Readiness Command Team

### Commanding Officer

LtCol Christopher J. Douglas  
Christopher.J.Douglas@usmc.mil

### Battalion Sergeant Major

SgtMaj Frank J. Gerraughty  
Frank.Gerraughty@usmc.mil

### Inspector & Instructor

LtCol Eric Hamstra  
Eric.Hamstra@usmc.mil

### Battalion Chaplain

Chaplain Frank Rupnik  
rupnikIII@hotmail.com  
(513) 703-1217

### Family Readiness Officer

MSgt Kirk Merametdjian  
krikor.merametdjian@usmc.mil  
Office: (586) 239-2524  
Cell: (586) 530-3881

### Family Readiness Advisor

Mrs. Susan Douglas

### Family Readiness Assistant

Mrs. Christy Stravolo Hamstra

## Message from the 1st Battalion 24th Marines Commander

Dear Families and Friends of 1/24,



I am writing to extend a heartfelt thanks to the families and friends who have supported 1st Battalion, 24th Marines during the last year. Further, I would like to extend a personal invitation to you to re-establish your ties with the command and the Family Readiness Program over the up-coming year.

I was honored assume command of this superb Battalion in November 2009. It is an awesome responsibility, and one that I do not take lightly. I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of the outstanding Officers who have served the Battalion so well and loved it so dearly. For the past two years I have had the opportunity to be part of the Battalion's strong character and superb capabilities. I have determined the success of the unit is due to the quality Marines and Sailors that comprise it. The success of the individuals is directly related to the support that you provide. In every instance, I have been impressed and inspired by the Battalion's intense sense of pride and esprit-de-corps. "Can do" is a common refrain throughout the command.

Since assuming command, I have learned that this "can-do" attitude also resonates though the Battalion's network of families and friends. I have seen that the source of the Battalion's strength is not solely from the courage and stamina of its young warriors, but also emanates from the solidarity and support of their families and friends. Our Marines and Sailors voluntarily entered the service of their country and are now prepared to fight her battles to defend the freedom and security of their loved ones. However, these warriors cannot sustain that fight without your continued love and support. For it is not the height or girth of the oak tree that gives it its strength, rather it is the depth and breadth of its roots, networked beneath the soil. You are our "roots!" You are the foundation on which this Battalion is built and grows ever taller, ever stronger. For this reason, I would encourage you to maintain a close association with the Battalion and its network of families and friends.

- Continued on pg. 3

## Message from the Battalion Sergeant Major

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A quick bio on myself:

I enlisted in the Marine Corps on May 21, 1982 as a Reserve Marine while I attended college. In 1990, I was activated and mobilized in support of Operation Desert Shield/ Desert Storm. I was attached to 8thMOTR out of Camp Lejeune, NC to spend my birthday in lovely Kuwait at some really obscure grid coordinate sharing the last bag of pistachios and a cup of field expedient coffee. I relocated to the Charlotte, NC area in 1992 and have lived there since. I was again activated and mobilized in 2006 in support of for Operation Iraqi Freedom where I was assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion-5A out of Camp Pendleton, CA to again spend my birthday in Southwest Asia; this time Al Anbar Province, Fallujah. I was promoted to SgtMaj last year and joined 1stBn 24thMarRgt to go forth and do great things.



As we all know, our task to support Operation Enduring Freedom was cancelled and now we follow orders, to hone our skills as the tip of the spear through effective training. Part of our mission essential tasks is having an effective Family Readiness Program.

The Family Readiness Organization is a well structured resource that can provide families with timely information and tools to manage most everything they require to not only manage their family while the member is on deployment but, to enable them to acquire lifelong skills. Family Readiness Organizations may assist with everything from managing a budget, to legal matters and personal counseling.

As Reserve Marines and their families, we play a critical role in the overall Total Force Structure. It's absolutely critical that when we receive the call to duty, that we do so effectively. In order to make this process as seamless as possible, it's critical that we attain the necessary skills. We must learn how best to do our part as family members, so that our Marines stay focused during their mission. By managing this issue with due diligence, we provide the Commanding Officer a combat multiplier. We do this by assuring to the best of our ability that our Marine is focused on his or her job-not whether or not the rent is getting paid or the car is still overheating on the way to day care.

I strongly encourage all to embrace the Family Readiness Organization and all it has to offer. Not only is it a general good source of information for day to day life, but as Marine Family Members-it's a necessary tool.

If you have any questions at all-please feel free to call me, the Battalion Family Readiness Officer or your company 1stSgt. There'll be a contact list published; I strongly encourage all to do their part as a 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment Family members.

Sincerely,  
Sergeant Major Frank J. Gerraughty

## Message from the 1/24 Battalion Commander (continued)

Over the next year, each company will host a family day. Whenever possible, I urge you to attend for both the pure enjoyment and the opportunity to meet other family members. The FRO with assistance from the Family Readiness Advisor will produce a quarterly newsletter with unit specific family information. Additionally, the newsletter will provide invaluable information on the support available to you and your family through the Marine Corps. This information will also be available on the Battalion website. While the FRO cannot solve all the problems that may arise, he can provide you with information and guidance to better care for your family and yourself. Please note that the FRO is always seeking additional volunteers (see article on pg. 5) who are willing to give their time and energies to support the other families within the command.

Both Susan and I thank you for the sacrifices you have made and are prepared to make for your Marine or Sailor, this command, and the Corps.

Semper Fidelis!



## Message from the Family Readiness Advisor

Greetings Families!

As my husband stated in his comments above, we are proud to have the opportunity to work with and support the Marines, Sailors and families of 1/24. As a member of the 1/24 family, I am pleased that I have been appointed the 1/24 Family Readiness Advisor. The Command Team recently participated in a series of training sessions in preparation to more readily and efficiently meet the needs of our 1/24 families. My goal along with the Family Readiness Officer has always been to provide a link between the command and the family in order to maintaining an active and effective Family Readiness program.

My husband Chris and I began our journey in the Marine Corps the same year that we were married, over 20 years ago. It has been an amazing journey and we have had the opportunity to serve many units along the way. I began as a Key Volunteer and I have had the opportunity to work with extraordinary volunteers as I managed volunteer networks and the company and battalion levels. As a military spouse, I have supported my husband through 3 wartime deployments. In each unit, Family Readiness and support of the Marines and their families has been of utmost importance.

Chris and I have always believed and have taken the approach that the Marine Corps is a family and we have continued to pass along that spirit to the many diverse families we have had the pleasure of serving with long the way. The success of the Battalion depends upon the readiness of our Marines and our Unit Family Readiness Command Team has an abundance of resources and training available to support and assist our families.

I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you at recent company functions. I look forward to meeting many more of you at the upcoming company family events and I am extremely eager to work with those of you that would like to be involved in the volunteer efforts that are available. I look forward to meeting and working with you in the near future.

My Best! - Susan Douglas 

## A Message from the 1/24 Inspector - Instructor

Dear 1/24 Families and Friends,

I have been honored to serve with 1/24 as the Battalion Inspector-Instructor since July 2011. It has been great to meet all the outstanding Marines and families in 1/24 and I appreciate the warm welcome extended from the Marines and families to my wife, Christy, and me.



One of the strengths of the Marine Corps and this battalion is our belief that the success of our Marines is dependent upon the great support they receive from their families. Your support of the long hours that 1/24's Marines serve; the days, weekends and weeks that they are away from home is critical to ensuring the success of this Battalion. As you know, the Battalion currently has over twenty five Marines deployed throughout the world, including in the Pacific, Afghanistan, and Africa. Later this year, an additional twenty two Marines will be deploying for over six months to the country of Georgia to assist in training the Georgian forces in how Marines operate. The Battalion would greatly appreciate any volunteers to help support other families and the Battalion's Family Readiness Program. The Battalion FRO and the Company FROs listed on page 5 are ready to work with you.

Both Christy and I look forward to seeing you all during our upcoming family days in August and September and appreciate your support of 1/24's Marines and Sailors.

Semper Fidelis!

## UPCOMING 1ST BATTALION 24TH MARINES DRILL EVENTS



2012	H&S CO	A CO	B CO	C CO	WPNS CO
<b>JUNE</b>	21 - 24	21 - 24	21 - 24	20 - 24	21 - 24
<b>JULY</b> (BN A.T.)	14 - 28	NO DRILL	14 - 28	14 - 28	14 - 28
<b>AUGUST</b>	11 - 12	2 - 5	17 - 19	18 - 19	18
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	22	22	22	22	22 - 23

- ♦ A Co Marines - Check with Company Staff to confirm participation in the July AT-Drill Period
- ♦ B Co Marines - Check with Company Staff to determine time/date/location for participation in the Jul, Aug and Sept AT-Drill Periods

## A Message from the 1/24 Chaplain

Greetings Friends and Family of 1/24,



This will be the first of many times in which I will have the opportunity to address you. I am LT Frank Rupnik and I serve as the Battalion Chaplain for 1/24. As such, I provide for and facilitate all of the religious needs of the members of our unit. More than that, though, I am also a resource for families. Whatever your faith background, I am here to support you and your family. We realize that the sacrifices and demands the military places on its families are often great, which is why we want to do whatever we can to help. If you need anything, don't hesitate to call and I can either assist or direct you to someone who can.



Sincerely,  
Chaplain Frank Rupnik  
(513) 703-1217

### Chaplains Religious Enrichment Program (CREDO)

### The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)

**Chaplains Religious Enrichment Program (CREDO)** is a highly effective retreat program that supports the Marine Corps' readiness, retention, recruiting and quality of life priorities. Since its inception in 1971, it continues to provide programs for personal growth, character development, team building, ethical leadership, and workshops on marriage enrichment and spiritual growth. The retreats provide participants the opportunity to develop new perspectives about their relationships with family and friends, the military and spiritual traditions. Best of all it is FREE and open to all active duty military, Reservists, retirees, and family members.

**The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)** is a program dedicated to improving marriages by providing valuable education that gives partners the knowledge they need to develop and maintain a healthy and loving relationship. Couples learn communication skills that give them the ability to tell each other what they need in a manner that brings partners together, rather than pushing them apart. The techniques used in PREP are based on extensive research and have proven effective across the world. This program can be utilized before and during marriage.

- The programs outlined above are available to active duty military, Reservists, retirees and family members. If you are interested in attending CREDO or PREP please contact BN FRO, Master Sergeant Kirk Merametdjian. He will provide you with contact information and program availability.

## Message from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Marines Family Readiness Officer

Marines, Sailors and Family members,

We currently have several Marines who are deployed with other units, and a new group of Marines are preparing for a deployment for later this summer. Please keep these Marines and their families in your thoughts and prayers for a safe return home when their tour is complete.



As we come into the spring and summer months, there will be a lot going on with the monthly drills and Annual Training (A.T.) in July. These will result in additional time away from family. As Annual Training draws closer, it is a good idea to plan now for child care, bills, and care for loved ones during this two week separation. If any family needs assistance, please contact me so that I can find the resources that you may need.

Additionally, we are still looking for more volunteers to fill volunteer positions for each Company. If you have been thinking about volunteering, this is a great time to get involved. Volunteers will be reimbursed for mileage, and assistance is available for child care during your volunteer sessions. We will provide you with the appropriate training.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact either the Family Readiness Officer for your Marine's Company or myself for more information.

Semper Fidelis,

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Marines Family Readiness Officer  
Master Sergeant Kirk Merametdjian  
27601 C St.  
Selfridge ANGB, MI 48045  
Office: (586) 239-2524  
Cell: (586) 530-3881  
E-mail: [krikor.merametdjian@usmc.mil](mailto:krikor.merametdjian@usmc.mil)



## Company Family Readiness Officers (FROs)

Alpha Company Family Readiness Officer  
1stSgt Michael Lippencott  
(616) 363-1601, ext. 219  
[michael.c.lippencott@usmc.mil](mailto:michael.c.lippencott@usmc.mil)

Bravo Company Family Readiness Officer  
1stSgt Michael Speelman  
(989) 754-1442, ext. 225  
[michael.d.speelman1@usmc.mil](mailto:michael.d.speelman1@usmc.mil)

Charlie Company Family Readiness Officer  
1stSgt Robin Lee  
(517) 321-2970, ext. 2222  
[robin.lee@usmc.mil](mailto:robin.lee@usmc.mil)

Weapons Company Family Readiness Officer  
1stSgt Edward Ewing  
(419) 666-6992, ext. 203  
[edward.ewing@usmc.mil](mailto:edward.ewing@usmc.mil)



## L.I.N.K.S. Training

L.I.N.K.S. provides a positive environment for Marines and their families to learn to manage the demands of the Marine Corps lifestyle, and to work together as a team in balancing family needs while meeting Marine Corps expectations.



All Marines, spouses, children, teens, and parents of Marines are eligible to participate in L.I.N.K.S. Additionally, other Service Members and spouses serving with Marines, and Marine Corps civilian employees and spouses are eligible to participate.

## L.I.N.K.S. Training

L.I.N.K.S. is a volunteer, team-mentoring program, designed by Marine Corps spouses. The program offers an orientation to the Marine Corps lifestyle, helping spouses, Marines, children and teens, and parents/extended family members understand and adapt to the unique challenges military life often presents. While the curriculum targets those who are new to the Marine Corps community, the information is very beneficial at all levels of Marine Corps experience.

The program works through a partnership of volunteer spouses, Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) staff, Marine Corps Career Retention Specialists and Chaplains. The discussion group leaders are experienced military spouses who facilitate the learning process by using a mentoring style of presentation. The climate is informal, with a nurturing structure and format. Participants receive real life tips, information on Marine Corps culture, and available resources to enable them to help themselves.

L.I.N.K.S. is currently presented through volunteer teams on each Marine Corps Installation and through MARFORRES/New Orleans. No cost childcare is provided to participants. Additionally, the teams at Marine Corps Recruit Depots Parris Island and San Diego introduce L.I.N.K.S. to families of new Marines.

L.I.N.K.S. provides information on:

- Marine Corps history, tradition and language
- Benefits and services
- Financial awareness
- Dealing with separation and deployments
- Tips on moving
- Effective communication



### The Meaning of L.I.N.K.S

**L - Lifestyle** is a way of living and in this case it means understanding the military community and the unique lifestyle it offers.

**I - Marine Corps Lifestyle Insights** come from experienced Marine Corps spouses who relate their experiences of living the Marine Corps lifestyle, who understand first hand what you are going through and who want to help you understand and adapt to the new culture of which you are now a part.

**N - Networking** represents the people you get to know during L.I.N.K.S. and all the others you will meet during your journey in Marine Corps living.

**K - Knowledge** is what you will leave with and what will help you understand and navigate the Marine Corps culture.

**S -** Is for the new **Skills** you will learn to help you enjoy and thrive in our Marine Corps community.

- ♦ L.I.N.K.S. training was offered to Marines and family members in March and will be offered again in the near future. Please contact BN FRO, Master Sergeant Kirk Merametdjan if you would like to be contacted when future training sessions are being offered.

## Family Readiness Volunteers

Volunteers are making a difference in the Marine Corps! You too can make a difference in 1/24. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your Company Family Readiness Officer (numbers provided below).

Volunteers may be spouses or designated parent/extended family member. Volunteers support the FRO for specific, event-driven, short-term unit morale events. They shall be designated by the FRO as Volunteers for the planning, coordination, and execution of a specific unit morale event. These events include, but are not limited to

- holiday parties,
- unit family days,
- pre, mid and post deployment events
- family readiness-themed unit training events

Volunteers are encouraged to establish an account in the Volunteer Tracking Tool. This is an ideal venue for spouses or designated parents/extended family members to participate on a desired basis and to creatively involve those who are not geographically in close proximity to the unit.

To volunteer for or inquire about upcoming unit events, please contact your designated Company Family Readiness Officer (FRO):

Alpha Company FRO, 1stSgt Michael Lippencott  
(616) 363-1601, ext. 219

Bravo Company FRO, 1stSgt Michael Speelman  
(989) 754-1442, ext. 225

Charlie Company FRO, 1stSgt Robin Lee  
(517) 321-2970, ext. 2222

Weapons Company FRO, 1stSgt Edward Ewing  
(419) 666-6992, ext. 203

## Family Care Plans

A Family Care Plan is a document that outlines the financial, medical, legal, logistical, educational, and religious arrangements for the care of the Marine's family members up the absence of the Marine. The plan must include all reasonable foreseeable situations and be detailed enough to provide for a smooth, rapid transfer of responsibility to the caregiver upon the absence of the Marine. The plan should also be catered to the specific needs of each family situation. A Family Care Plan can be put into place with the support of a local staff judge advocate, legal officer, company first sergeant, or battalion sergeant major. The Marine Corps order concerning requirements for Family Care Plans is [MCO 1740.13B](#).

As a battalion we will be embracing this endeavor in the upcoming months. Please take a look at Marine Corps Order 1740.13B using the link provided above. Budget forms, emergency data forms and checklists are provided within the order to help you as you develop a plan.

For more information please contact:  
1/24 FRO, Master Sergeant Merametdjian  
Office: (586) 239-2524 / Cell: (586) 530-3881  
E-mail: [krikor.merametdjian@usmc.mil](mailto:krikor.merametdjian@usmc.mil)

## Family Readiness Advisors and Assistants

As well as specific event volunteers, each company incorporates the positions of Advisors and Assistants to work closely with the Company FROs. To serve as an Advisor or Assistant, volunteers will need to submit an application, process through the interview/selection and be appointed in writing by the commander. We recognize that family readiness directly affects the morale of Marines and is the key to mission accomplishment. If you are interested in serving in either the Advisor or Assistant please contact your company or the battalion FRO with your intent and qualifications. We look forward to welcoming new members to our Family Readiness Team!



Alpha Company in Morocco - Exercise AFRICAN LION

April 7-20, 2012



Alpha Company 1/24 hike down to the beach



Alpha Company Mortars



LCpl O'Keefe (H&S Co) and Doc Witt (Alpha Co)  
with Moroccan Mortar Team



Bringing it in for the last night in Africa - staying warm



LCpl French (H&S Co), Sgt Ski and Alpha Co. Marines  
sitting on a rock ledge over the beach



Sgt Benedict, LCpl French and LCpl O'Keefe (H&S Co)

Alpha Company in Morocco - Exercise AFRICAN LION April 7-20, 2012



Alpha Company Marines checking out the beach



Cpl Jansen, LCpl O'Keefe, LCpl French and Alpha Co. Marines



Alpha Company 1/24 guidon overlooking Range 4



S-6 LCpl O'Keefe and LCpl French overlooking the beach



Alpha Company mortar team racing the Moroccan mortar team



Alpha Company: LCpl Pirkola, LCpl Reeser, LCpl Altop (H&S Co), LCpl O'Keefe and LCpl French

## RESOURCES



TRICARE is the health care program for Uniformed Service members, retirees and their families worldwide.

**North Region**  
Health Net Federal Services  
1.877.874.2273  
<http://www.tricare.mil/>



**FOCUS** (Families Over-Coming Under Stress) provides resiliency training to military families. It teaches practical skills to meet the challenges of deployment and reintegration, to communicate and solve problems effectively, and to successfully set goals together and create a shared family story. (Families Over-Coming Under Stress) is a resiliency-building program designed for military families and children facing the multiple challenges of combat operational stress during war-time.



[www.focusproject.org](http://www.focusproject.org)

**Military OneSource** is a comprehensive source to help you face life's everyday challenges.

**Military OneSource...**a Marine & family resource program to help make your life a little easier. Online or by phone, Military OneSource is fast, confidential, and easy to use and it is of no cost to service members and their families. And best of all, it's there for you any time of the day or night, wherever you are. The program can give you information, advice, and support on a wide range of everyday issues, including parenting and child care, education, older adults, financial, legal, and everyday issues.

1-800-342-9647  
[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)



**Military OneSource offers you:**

- A real person to talk to when you need an answer to a question
- An award-winning Web site with online articles, workshops, locators, and much more
- Free booklets, audio recordings, and other materials to help you get the answers you need in the format you want
- Referrals to resources, services, and support in your community
- A commitment to always being there when you have a question or need help.

## American Red Cross

**Social Security # of Marine:**

**Address Where Deployed:**

**Home Base Unit:**

1st BN, 24th MAR  
27601 C St.  
Selfridge ANGB, MI 48045

**Local Red Cross Chapter:**

Southern Michigan Chapter  
American Red Cross

100 Mack Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48201  
313-833-4440

<http://www.redcrossblood.org/southeasternmichigan>