



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

Office of Corporate Communications  
1300 E Avenue • Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8773 DSN: 687-8773 • FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248  
[www.commissaries.com](http://www.commissaries.com)

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**Contact:** Kevin Robinson, Media Relations  
Tel.: (804) 734-8773  
E-mail: [kevin.robinson@deca.mil](mailto:kevin.robinson@deca.mil)

### **‘Back to school’ activities should include Family Day**

*By Bonnie Powell, [bonnie.powell@deca.mil](mailto:bonnie.powell@deca.mil)*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – The official end of summer is not until the end of September, but the “real” end of summer for military families worldwide is when the school bells ring. “Back to school” means new clothes, new schedules and hurried meals. Days get more hectic and family time is often hard to come by. That’s one reason why commissaries are partnering with family support groups, family associations, the health and wellness community, DoD schools and others to celebrate “Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children” on Monday, Sept. 25.

“This represents the kind of activity we should encourage in our schools and at every installation,” said Leslye Arsht, deputy undersecretary of defense for military community and family policy. “The more time our military families spend interacting, the more resilient they become and the better equipped they are to deal with life stress. This is especially important when a parent is deployed.”

“Commissaries have a commitment to providing healthy food at healthy savings,” said Patrick Nixon, director of the Defense Commissary Agency. “We also have a commitment to healthy families, and combining meals with family time is a natural fit for us. Since Family Day is Sept. 25, it ties in well with back-to-school activities and draws attention to the importance of family interaction.”

“Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children,” the fourth Monday of September each year, is the invention of The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. According to CASA research, the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. And they get better grades. Family Day is supported each year by President Bush and last year 1.3 million Americans made a pledge to have a family dinner. “We’d like to see military active duty, retirees and Guard and Reserve families double that amount,” said Nixon.

The Department of Defense Education Activity is partnering with DeCA on “Family Day” and is encouraging its more than 200 schools at home and abroad to work with local commissaries to get the word out. “DoDEA is pleased to join DeCA in this effort to encourage families to dine together,” said Frank O’Gara, DoDEA spokesperson. “When parents and students dine together, they have an opportunity to discuss education and school issues. These discussions lead to greater parental involvement and interest and can go a long way in fostering success for all children.”

TRICARE is also participating in the effort to get the word out on Family Day.

To sweeten the pot, the military sales division of The Coca-Cola Company is offering a chance for a military family to win a trip to New York for a “healthy” dinner prepared by renowned Food Channel chef Sandra Lee. The contest will be conducted online Sept. 1-30 and can be accessed through a link at the commissary Web site at <http://www.commissaries.com>. Customers will also find contest information at product displays in most U.S. commissaries starting in September.

The commissary Web site will be Family Day central for the military to find links to make a symbolic pledge to dine as a family, get more information about “Family Day – A Day to Have Dinner with Your Children,” and even link to family meal ideas.

Commissaries worldwide are also holding another back-to-school event in September: case lot sales. Case lot sales offer authorized shoppers the chance to stock up at savings that far exceed the overall average commissary savings of 30 percent over commercial stores. Coincidentally, case lot sales at many commissaries in Europe are being held the weekend prior to Family Day. Find out more details at the worldwide case lot sale page at <http://www.commissaries.com>.

The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of 30 percent or more on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$2,700 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.

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