



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Contest to win a family dinner in New York kicks off 'Family Day' emphasis

By Bonnie Powell, bonnie.powell@deca.mil

FORT LEE, Va. – A military family will win a trip to New York and a special dinner courtesy of a worldwide contest to draw attention to “Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children.”

Created by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, “Family Day” is the fourth Monday of September each year. This year it falls on Sept. 25. 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. Last year 1.3 million Americans “pledged” to have dinner with their children on “Family Day.”

“The military community certainly has a strong sense of family, but focusing on an event like this reminds us just how important something as simple as eating dinner together is to the health of our families,” said Patrick Nixon, director of the Defense Commissary Agency.

To draw even greater attention to Family Day, the military sales team of The Coca-Cola Company is sponsoring a three-day, two-night trip to New York. The winner will also get a family dinner cooked by Sandra Lee, best-selling author and host of the Food Network show “Semi-Homemade with Sandra Lee.” Lee’s latest cookbook “Semi-Homemade Grilling” will be awarded to second-place winners.

Commissary patrons can go to the DeCA Web site at <http://www.commissaries.com> to access links to the contest, make a “symbolic” pledge to have a family dinner on Sept. 25, get more information about “Family Day,” or find healthy recipes. The contest is open from Sept. 1-30.

“This is a unique event for us,” said Doug McAlister, director of the Coca-Cola worldwide military sales team. “Coca-Cola is the national corporate sponsor of ‘Family Day,’ but the military sales team is taking it a step further for the benefit of the entire military community. Conducting the contest online gives military retirees, Guard/Reserve and active duty a chance to enter – whether they are in Germany or Guam, Illinois or Iraq.”

Being the eldest of five children, Sandra Lee appreciates the importance of family dinners. “Growing up in a small town in Washington state, we always ate dinners together,” she said. “It gave us a chance to talk about school, our day – and I think it made a difference in my life.”

Lee specializes in meals made by spicing up everyday, store-bought products. “We requested she prepare a ‘healthy’ meal for the winner and she agreed immediately,” said McAlister.

Coincidentally, Sandra Lee is working on a new cookbook for 2007 focusing on light and healthy cooking. “That is certainly the trend for America right now,” she said. “People have busy lives and not a lot of time to spend on cooking, but there isn’t any reason light and healthy meals can’t also be fast and delicious.”

“That’s great,” said Nixon. “It really fits in with DeCA’s ‘It’s Your Choice, Make it Healthy’ initiative encouraging military families to think of the commissary as the place for healthy food, healthy savings, and healthy family!”

DoD schools, TRICARE and family organizations such as the National Military Family Association as well as military Web sites and many others are supporting the Family Day concept.

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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