



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Be a STAR to your children on Family Day and every day

*By Tammy Moody,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Fort Lee Commissary shopper Carmen Mercado and her family of four are perfect examples of what the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse’s Family Day initiative is all about. Mercado and her husband Pedro, a warrant officer, have raised their three sons, ages 18, 21 and 23, with almost daily meals at the dinner table.

On Sept. 28, the Defense Commissary Agency celebrates CASA’s Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children™, which is a national effort that encourages parents to eat dinner with their children as a simple, effective way to reduce substance abuse by their offspring.

“More than a decade of the center’s research has consistently found that the more often kids eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs,” said Joseph A. Califano Jr., CASA chairman and president.

“I believe CASA’s study is right, as it works for us,” Mercado said. “During dinner we talk about the day, what they did at school, what they are planning for the next day, and sometimes we even fight, but not too often.

“We’ve gotten so used to that time together, that it feels weird if we miss it,” she added. “Two of my sons will even cook dinner for us, if I’m not feeling well, so it keeps us close.”

The Mercado parents are who CASA and the Defense Commissary Agency would call STARS when it comes to celebrating Family Day every day.

CASA encourages all military families to be STARs by doing the following:

- **Spend** time with their children by having dinner together
- **Talk** to them about their day
- **Answer** any questions
- **Recognize** that they have the power to help their children stay substance free.

DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. said military commissaries look forward to celebrating Family Day with as many STARs as possible. “It’s only natural that DeCA and CASA are partners for this celebration as commissaries are a core element of military family support,” he added. “They contribute to family readiness by enabling families to locate and live with military members around the world, and they provide a taste of home.”

The commissary is also collaborating with Family Day national sponsor the Coca-Cola Company to produce special recipe cards to inspire moms and dads to make dinner from scratch, a healthier option than restaurant take out and fast-food meals.

“Commissaries place special emphasis on health and wellness for our military and their families, especially for their newest members,” explained DeCA dietitian Lt. Col. Karen Hawkins. “Family Day presents a unique opportunity to highlight our Li'l Heroes Baby Program, which provides healthy eating advice for mothers-to-be, newborns and children, as well as money-saving coupons and other resources through the Li'l Heroes Benefit Bulletin e-newsletter.”

For more information on becoming a Family Day STAR, visit the official Web site at www.CASAFamilyDay.org. You can visit www.commissaries.com/baby, for more information on the Li'l Heroes Baby Program, and for ways to save even more than 30 percent when you shop at your local commissary. With the savings on your food, as well as the commissary recipes and healthy eating tips, it’s even easier to make eating dinner with your family an everyday affair.

- DeCA-

About DeCA: *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 more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 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.