



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8524 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 4-8524

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 98-09
Date: October 19, 2009
Contact: Millie Slamin, public affairs specialist
Tel.: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 8-6111
E-mail: mildred.slamin@deca.mil

NOTE: To access photos related to this news release, click on the following link:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/sets/72157622494188209/>. From there, click on the photo(s) you want and then select the “all sizes” button above the picture.

DeCA employees commit to customer service excellence

*By Millie Slamin,
DeCA public affairs specialist*

FORT LEE, Va. – Imagine how surprised service members are when they arrive for duty on a remote island in the Azores and discover there is a commissary there. But also imagine how pleasantly surprised they will be when they receive the very same outstanding customer service there as they experienced at the commissary at their previous duty station.

Whether patrons shop at commissaries on Guam or in Japan, in Hawaii or Maine, they are certain to receive the same great, uniformly consistent customer service – especially now that all 16,017 Defense Commissary Agency employees, worldwide, have completed a day-long world class customer service workshop.

“I want our customers to be able to walk into any commissary anywhere in the world and have the same great shopping experience no matter where they are,” said DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. “To make this possible, we sent every employee – from corporate staff at our headquarters in Fort Lee, Va., to each one of our 255 commissaries worldwide – to the Dale Carnegie World Class Customer Service Training.”

The eight-hour workshops were conducted from Aug. 15 to Oct. 16 by Dale Carnegie trainers who set up training in commissaries and elsewhere on installations throughout the

United States and overseas. The training was a huge success with DeCA employees, who came away from the interactive course excited about providing customers at their stores with the best customer service possible.

Susanne McKinley, a 13 ½-year DeCA employee who works in computer-assisted ordering at the Ord Community Commissary, Monterey, Calif., said she pleases customers by being helpful and smiling. Now armed with tools from the workshop, she's ready to use them in her daily routine.

Acting Store Administrator Matthew Harris from the Mountain Home Air Force Base Commissary, Idaho, said he is also excited about applying what he learned to his daily interactions with customers.

"I have committed to going above and beyond my duty to customers, making sure they experience the best customer service while in the commissary," said Harris.

The seven-year DeCA employee said commissary patrons should immediately recognize an improved level of commitment to customer service, even though DeCA scored a remarkable 4.67 points out of 5 on the latest customer satisfaction survey.

"I think our customers will be more likely to make the commissary the place to shop, because of the superior service they will receive," said Harris.

Throughout the two-month-long training period, DeCA employees, 30 people to a session, attended the 751 single-day workshops where everyone from the agency's director to store associates received the same training materials and lectures.

"I liked the fact that everyone had a chance to say what was on their mind and got to exchange ideas," admitted Linda Mims, an 18-year DeCA employee who works as a sales associate at the Ord Community Commissary.

Mims said she was glad to know that she was going through the same training as everyone else in DeCA. Stephanie Abbey, a store worker at Lajes Field Commissary in the Azores (Portugal), agreed.

"I think it's wonderful that everyone in DeCA is receiving this training," Abbey said excitedly. "I believe that DeCA already has outstanding customer service, but taking it to the next level benefits everyone."

"After completing this workshop, employees throughout DeCA East, West and Europe are motivated and ready to catapult customer service satisfaction far beyond DeCA's near perfect score," said Sakowitz.

While Abbey said she found the training to be very helpful and educational, lead store

associate Joyce Evans, from the Ord Community Commissary, said it gave her greater confidence in performing her job.

For DeCA's employees, the World Class Customer Service Training reinforced their commitment to providing superior customer service and gave them a better understanding of how they would personally provide that type of service.

Daniel Reis, supply technician at the Lajes Field Commissary, said he tries his best to make patrons happy and keep them satisfied at all times. Yet, after completing the customer service training, he said he will be even more professional and maintain a more positive, friendly attitude.

"I have made a commitment to myself to always approach customers with a positive attitude," Reis said, "and always take time to listen to their concerns."

- 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.*