



NEWS RELEASE

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LA Commissary store director honored for leadership

*By Nancy O’Nell,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Alfredo “Al” Alferez, store director for Los Angeles Air Force Base Commissary, is the recipient of the Defense Commissary Agency’s Blackwell Leadership Award for 2009. The award is presented each year to recognize the DeCA employee who has demonstrated exceptional leadership, courage and integrity in the performance of his or her duties. Alferez received the award June 9 at the agency’s training conference in Atlanta.

“Great leaders inspire people to perform at a higher level, and Al has demonstrated time and again his ability to turn his vision into reality by engaging those around him,” said Keith Hagenbuch, DeCA West director. “As an agency, we have given Al some tough assignments, and he has taken on each one with magnificent results.”

Using his leadership abilities, Alferez turned an average-performing store into an exceptional one, according to Robert Varela, Alferez’s supervisor and a DeCA zone manager. “When Al arrived at Los Angeles Commissary, the store was a mid-performing store,” Varela said. “Within a year, Al had improved store metrics in every category. He set high standards for store appearance, cleanliness and customer service and provided training and recognition for high-performing employees. Morale improved by leaps and bounds and sales grew.”

Under Alferez’s guidance the commissary’s customer service scores improved and the store was a finalist in DeCA’s 2009 Best Commissary competition.

Alferez said one of the leadership principles he follows is simply to care about people. “The person in front of me at any moment, whether they are a store customer, an employee, my

wife, my son, my neighbor or my boss, is my customer; and I give my best effort to care, respect and serve them,” he said.

One of his most significant accomplishments was developing leaders among the Los Angeles Commissary staff. Many management positions were vacant when Alferez was assigned as store director in 2007. He provided training opportunities and mentored store employees to prepare them to move up. Today, most all of the management and supervisory positions at the Los Angeles Commissary are held by employees promoted from within the store.

“I believe in the management idiom, ‘Take care of your people, so they take care of your customers, who will take care of your business.’ My employees are my partners, and I seek their ideas and input on everything we do. The store’s success is the team’s success,” Alferez said.

The Blackwell Leadership Award is named in honor of the late Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael W. Blackwell, who served as DeCA’s senior enlisted advisor to the director from March 1994 to March 1995.

On receiving the award, Alferez said, “This is a great distinction to be personified in the leadership traits of Chief Master Sgt. Michael Blackwell. I have received commissary awards in the past, but this one is the best ... to be recognized for the leadership qualities I have exemplified throughout my career. I will treasure this award that I proudly receive in his honor. I don’t expect to be recognized or rewarded for what I do; I just do it, because I care and love what I do.”

-DeCA-

Photo caption: Los Angeles Commissary Store Director Alfredo “Al” Alferez (left) accepts DeCA’s Blackwell Leadership Award from Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., then DeCA director and CEO, during DeCA’s annual award presentation June 9 in Atlanta. The leadership award is presented each year to recognize the employee who has demonstrated exceptional leadership, courage and integrity in the performance of his or her duties. (DeCA Photo: Rick Brink)

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 more than \$4,400 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.