



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Corporate Communication

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DeCA Patron Council represents customer views

*By Courtney Rogers,
DeCA customer relations specialist*

NOTE: To see photographs related to DeCA's Patron Council meeting on Sept. 29, 2010, visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/sets/72157625212076108/>.

FORT LEE, Va. – The message of the Defense Commissary Agency's 2010 Patron Council meeting was clear: Our customers are our No. 1 priority.

“We have passion for what we do, and we work around the clock to deliver a premier quality of life benefit to our customers,” said Thomas E. Milks, DeCA acting director and CEO. “Our stores are hard at work 24 hours a day – not just when we're open for our customers. We have to reorder, receive trucks, unload deliveries and restock shelves, clean floors and complete a number of other tasks after our doors close at night so we're prepared to serve our customers again the next day.”

DeCA's Patron Council members represent all authorized commissary customers, including active duty, Guard, Reserve, retirees, overseas Department of Defense civilians and family members. The council meets annually to share views and recommendations with DeCA's senior leadership. Council members base their input on comments they receive from commissary customers around the world, as well as their own experiences. They also work throughout the year to provide commissary information to their constituents.

“In addition to delivering savings of 30 percent or more to our customers, we are working with other military organizations and our industry partners to create programs that support the military community,” said James Frost, director of corporate communication. “The patron

council not only provides us insight into our customers' perspectives, but also helps educate our customers about what we are doing to serve them better.”

This year's meeting, held Sept. 29 at DeCA's Fort Lee, Va., headquarters, allowed council members to tour updated facilities at the headquarters and get an inside view of how DeCA manages the commissary benefit on a day-to-day basis. The meeting included briefings from senior agency officials to educate council members about DeCA's top initiatives.

DeCA Sales Director Chris Burns said the agency's Guard and Reserve on-site sales program has brought the benefit to more than 182,000 customers since the program's inception in fiscal 2008, saving customers more than \$9 million. The program offers about 150 commissary sales per year at National Guard and Reserve centers not located near a commissary. DeCA is looking at ways to expand the impact of the program, including tentative plans to add a feature to its [website](#) that would allow customers to pre-order and prepay for their on-site sale purchases.

Jay Hudson, DeCA's director of performance and policy, spoke about commissary construction projects and the agency's electronic shelf label initiative. DeCA will be expanding its use of these labels over the next few years to automate price changes in commissaries and significantly reduce the potential for price discrepancies. This advancement will also reduce the work hours required for price changes, allowing commissaries to operate more efficiently.

Council members discussed a variety of topics, including the importance of health and wellness initiatives, suggestions for how commissaries can help customers save time while shopping, and how to build relationships with the customers they represent.

Customers are encouraged to contact council members via e-mail to share their concerns and suggestions about the commissary benefit. However, day-to-day operational issues, such as policy questions or product requests, are best handled by submitting comments to DeCA's Your Action Line customer comment program at http://www.commissaries.com/YAL/customer_comments.cfm or contacting store management at your commissary.

Patron Council members

- **Reserve component representative:** Col. Cory Lyman, cory.lyman@osd.mil
- **Air Force Retiree and Family Matters representative:** Retired Chief Master Sgt. Of the Air Force Rodney McKinley, rod.mckinley@microtech.net
- **Air Force Senior Enlisted Representative:** vacant
- **Air Force Reserve Command senior enlisted representative:** vacant

- **Air National Guard family member:** Jennifer Kuhlman, jennifer.kuhlman@ang.af.mil
- **Army Retirement Services representative:** Retired Col. John Radke, john.w.radke@us.army.mil
- **Army Well-Being representative:** Cathy Jackman, cathy.jackman@hqda.army.mil
- **Army National Guard senior enlisted representative:** vacant
- **Sgt. Maj. of the Army representative:** Command Sgt. Maj. Abe Vega, abe.vegavalle@us.army.mil
- **Army Reserve senior enlisted representative:** Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Schultz, michael.d.schultz@usar.army.mil
- **Army National Guard family member:** Ellen Lever, leverf@bellsouth.net
- **Army National Guard retiree representative:** Retired Col. Peter Duffy, pete.duffy@ngaus.org
- **Coast Guard senior enlisted representative:** vacant
- **Coast Guard Reserve senior enlisted advisor:** Master Chief Petty Officer Gail Owens, owens@comcast.net
- **Marine Corps senior enlisted representative:** vacant
- **Marine Corps family member:** Lanae Weaver, gooddogchip@yahoo.com
- **Marine Corps family member:** Julie Jones, julierobinjones@gmail.com
- **Navy senior enlisted representative:** Force Master Chief Petty Officer Steve Markum, stephen.markum@navy.mil
- **Navy family member:** Jacqueline Hayes, jacqueline.johnson-hayes@navy.mil
- **Overseas civilian representative (Europe):** vacant
- **Overseas civilian representative (Far East):** Candace Currier, candace.e.currier@usmc.mil
- **Fleet Reserve Association and Military Coalition representative:** Retired Master Chief Petty Officer Joseph Barnes, ned@fra.org
- **Association of the United States Army representative:** Sylvia Kidd, skidd@ausa.org
- **National Military Family Association representative:** Candace Wheeler, cwheeler@militaryfamily.org

-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 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.