



NEWS RELEASE

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Commissaries, Military Pathways helping customers embrace healthier lifestyle

FORT LEE, Va. – This holiday season, the Defense Commissary Agency and the Department of Defense-funded program Military Pathways have partnered to help military families embrace a healthier lifestyle and highlight the important relationship between physical and psychological health.

As part of this partnership, the 10 largest stateside commissaries are distributing free Military Pathways eco-friendly grocery bags to customers throughout December. The bags display the message, “Good for your body, good for your mind, good for your wallet,” and promote the use of the commissary as well as Military Pathways’ online mental health screenings at <http://www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org>. Military Pathways is a voluntary, anonymous mental health and alcohol education and screening program offered to military personnel and their families in all branches, including the National Guard and Reserve.

The commissaries participating in this holiday initiative include: Naval Base San Diego, Calif.; Fort Bragg South, N.C.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Langley Commissary at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.; Little Creek Commissary at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Va.; Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla.; Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.; Fort Bliss, Texas; McGuire Commissary at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.; and Fort Jackson, S.C.

“We can’t think of a more natural partnership than this one,” said Chris Burns, DeCA’s director of sales. “Both our missions stress the importance of health: healthy eating, healthy spending and a healthy mind through screening and education. Plus, the same people eligible for

a Military Pathways screening are eligible for commissary benefits.”

The DeCA-Military Pathways initiative stemmed from the concept that, during the holidays, increased excitement, stress and anxiety can cause people to make unhealthy food choices, Burns said. These unhealthy choices can not only affect their waistline, but can have a negative effect on finances, mood and emotional well-being.

Tips for staying healthy during the holidays include the following:

- **Use alcohol moderately:** Instead of including alcohol on your holiday shopping list, try stocking up on nonalcoholic beer, decaffeinated coffee, tea or juice.
- **Eat right and nurture your body:** Fill your commissary bag with fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats and natural foods. Try to get at least eight hours of sleep per night and exercise for at least 30 minutes a day.
- **Learn to identify your moods:** The holiday blues are a common response to a stressful season. However, if feelings of hopelessness and anxiety persist for longer than two weeks and interfere with your normal, daily routine, seek professional help.
- **Set a holiday budget:** Overspending during the season can lead to stress and anxiety. Spend wisely and remember it is the thought that counts.

This is not the first time the two organizations have teamed up to promote physical and emotional well-being. In May of 2008, in commemoration of Mental Health Month, DeCA distributed Military Pathways grocery bags and refrigerator magnets to more than 200 commissaries worldwide. This awareness campaign reminded thousands in the military community that a healthy diet helps you stay emotionally fit. In addition, it resulted in more than 2,500 people visiting the Military Pathways screening website (www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org) and checking up on their emotional well-being.

For more information regarding Military Pathways, please call 781-591-5228 or email Kfitzgerald@mentalhealthscreening.org.