



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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DeCA announces ‘Commissary Commando’ winners

*By Tammy L. Moody,
DeCA marketing and mass communications specialist*

FORT LEE, Va. – The Defense Commissary Agency announced the six winning teams who exposed the most single service members to their commissary benefit during May’s Commissary Commando Competition.

In Texas, at Sheppard Air Force Base, the Single Airman Program won the \$1,500 grand prize, while the following five teams earned place awards and honorable mention respectively:

- 1st place, \$1,000: Single Marine Program, Marine Corps Base Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan.
- 2nd place, \$750: Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers, Fort Eustis, Va.
- 3rd place, \$500: Liberty Northwest, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash.
- 4th place, \$250: Single Marine Program, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, San Diego, Calif.
- Honorable mention, \$150: Single Marine Program, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C.

A coalition of food industry partners, who are part of the American Logistics Association’s Consumer Awareness Team, sponsors the competition each year and provides the cash prizes. The team meets with DeCA marketing reps to judge the top 10 submissions based on originality, creativity, presentation and number of service members touring the commissaries.

As part of Commissary Awareness Month, the recently renamed Commissary Commando Competition introduces young single soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen to commissary shopping through an annual competition of single service member groups.

Store directors and coordinators for the Army's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers, Single Marine, Air Force's Single Airman, and Navy Liberty programs enticed their "commandos" through commissary doors with creative competitions such as turkey bowling, shopping cart races, eating contests, scavenger hunts and physical fitness challenges. The winners received bikes, skateboards, food and more. Participants also learned about their commissaries through fun, fact-filled tours and activities.

More than 80 groups registered and toured, with 28 of the groups submitting their program ideas and number of participants to DeCA for cash prizes ranging from \$150 to the grand prize of \$1,500.

Sheppard Commissary Store Director Donna Romolton worked with Air Force 1st Lt. Daniel Chavez to introduce 5,261 airmen to their commissary, earning them the grand prize.

"We are a training environment, and we try to expose our airmen to as much of their new military life as possible, which includes their commissary," Chavez said.

"Donna opened the store for us on a day it's not normally open, and I coordinated with all the squadrons to participate in the event. I thought they'd send small groups here and there, but I was amazed at the waves and masses of people who participated in our games and tours.

"I heard a few of the airmen mention that the event was an eye-opener because this was their first commissary, and it was good to know what it offered."

This year's competition was the first time the services competed against each other, instead of within each branch.

"We made sure we had buy-in from the commands and solicited the help of the command sergeants major," said Okinawa's Single Marine Program Manager Randolph Mitchell. "Then we explained to the participants about the prizes and who we were competing against and from that point on it was 'game on.' They really had a good time doing the video at Camp Kinser."

Mitchell said he and his group were excited to win first place. He added that they plan to use their winnings to help the Marines visit Okinawa Expo Park-Churaumi Aquarium, which is an added bonus to what they will get from the commissary.

"I know many of the participants really learned some things and were able to see the cost savings," he said. "And now they only shop in the commissary."

DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. said, "Connecting with young single

service members and introducing them to their commissary benefit is a huge part of Commissary Awareness Month.

“Although the events and the games get the single service members’ attention and get them into the commissary, they (service members) also learn about the 30 percent savings and other benefits,” Sakowitz added. “That’s what keeps them coming back.”

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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.*