

# ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



SEE FLEET WEEK 2023 SCHEDULE ON PAGE 2

San Diego Navy/Marine Corps Dispatch [www.armedforcesdispatch.com](http://www.armedforcesdispatch.com) 619.280.2985  
Serving active duty and retired military personnel, veterans and civil service employees

SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 24  
NOVEMBER 8, 2023



**TEAM SPIRIT** Marines with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 31, Marine Aircraft Group 31, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, celebrate after winning a flag football tournament at MCAS Beaufort, S.C. Oct. 26, 2023. MALS-31 held the tournament to improve camaraderie and unit cohesion. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Mason Coots

## U.S. has 4 objectives in Middle East

by David Vergun

The Defense Department currently has four lines of effort in the Middle East, said Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, who briefed the media Nov. 6.

- 1 Protection of U.S. forces and citizens in the region.
  - 2 Flow of critical security assistance to Israel as it defends against further Hamas terrorist attacks.
  - 3 Coordination with the Israelis to help secure the release of hostages held by Hamas, to include American citizens.
  - 4 Strengthening of force posture across the region to deter any state or nonstate actors from escalating the crisis beyond Gaza.
- Strengthened force posture

**PHOTO DETAILS** Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker arrives at an undisclosed location within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, Oct. 23, 2023. U.S. Air Force courtesy photo



includes the deployment of the USS *Gerald R. Ford* and USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Groups, which are currently in the U.S. Central Command area, along with an Ohio-class submarine.

Over the past few weeks there have been attacks by Iranian proxy groups at al-Asad air base, Iraq, and al-Tanf, Syria, on U.S. forces there, Ryder said.

The attacks, by drones and missiles, resulted in several dozen injuries, including a mix of minor injuries and traumatic brain injuries, he said.

Some of those injured didn't immediately report their condition, he said.

"The reporting data is highly dependent on self-reporting when individual injuries are not visually evident to medical personnel providing care directly following an incident," he said.

## VETERANS DAY FEATURE: 'WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT HELPED ME FIND FULFILLMENT'

Claude Boushey grew up surfing in the waters around Barbers Point Naval Air Station in Hawaii, watching military aircraft take off and land - and dreaming that someday, maybe he'd be a pilot himself. In 1983,

he joined the Army as an avionics mechanic and started to work his way up the ranks. Ten years later, he went to flight school and became a helicopter pilot.

His unit deployed to Iraq in

2004. One day, Claude and his copilot Dwight were on the way to assist at the site of an explosion and ambush when their helicopter crashed into a swamp. The impact shattered and compressed Claude's vertebrae and compromised 80 percent of his spinal canal.

"Usually, if your spine is compromised more than 40 percent, you're paralyzed," says Claude. "But after four surgeries and eight months of grueling rehab, I proved doctors wrong and started walking again."

While Claude was recovering in the hospital, one of the pilots who helped rescue him in Iraq, Captain Johnson, died in a crash. "That's when the emotional and mental roller coaster kicked in," says Claude. "I was never able to thank Captain Johnson for the

things that he did. That really impacted me a lot."

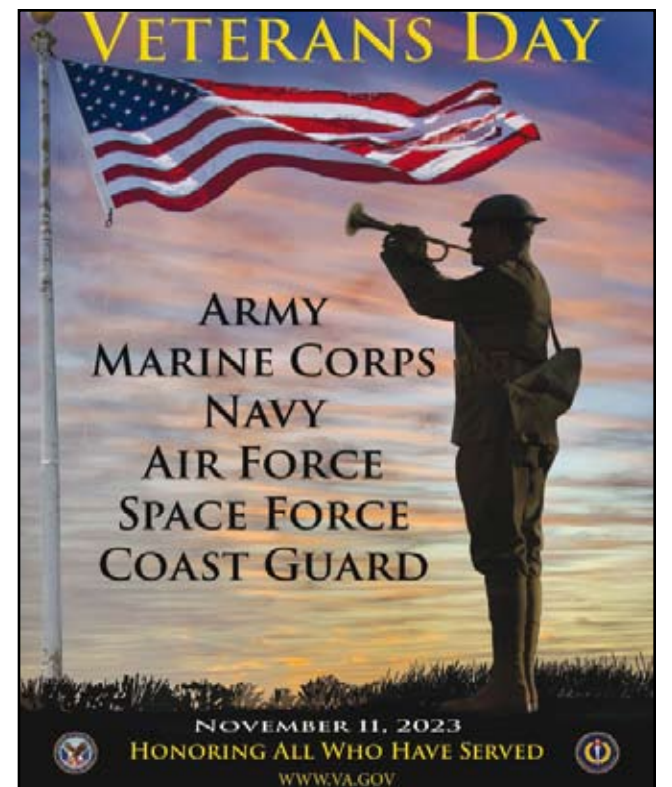
Even while dealing with post-traumatic stress, Claude was dedicated to returning to service. Fifteen months after his crash, Claude accepted another deployment to Iraq. Given all he'd been through, when he retired from the Army in 2008, Claude knew he had to find a way to stay connected with his fellow warriors — and that's when he found Wounded Warrior Project.

"Whenever you're around a bunch of warriors, it's always a good thing," says Claude. "Wounded Warrior Project gave me a platform to vent my frustrations and talk about my issues — and no one was being judged or criticized."

see **Veteran**, page 4



Claude Boushey



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[www.afdispatch.com](http://www.afdispatch.com)

### Veterans Day Parade

This year's parade is Sunday, Nov. 12. Pay tribute to our veterans. Information about location and directions included. See you there!

**See page 11**

## Fleet Week San Diego

Many events are at Broadway Pier downtown San Diego

San Diego is home to the largest U.S. military concentration in the country. Fleet Week San Diego is designed to honor and celebrate the military's incalculable contributions as defenders of our nation and neighbors in our community.

NOV 8-12 • 10am-4pm  
**MILITARY & VETERANS ART EXHIBIT**

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego

NOV 3 • 11:30am  
**ENLISTED RECOGNITION LUNCHEON**

San Diego Zoo

NOV 8 • 7:30am  
**SDMAC FLEET WEEK BREAKFAST**

Midway Museum

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**STUDENT STEM DAYS**

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NOV 10-12 • 10am-4pm  
**PUBLIC SHIP TOURS**

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NOV 11 • 10am-4pm  
**MILITARY FAMILY DAY**

Broadway Pier. FREE.

NOV 11, 2023  
**MRE COOKING CONTEST**

Military members show their cooking skills.

NOV 12 • 9:30am  
**VETERANS DAY BOAT PARADE**  
San Diego Bay

NOV 12 2pm  
**VETERANS DAY CONCERT**

See the Sully Band perform live at Fleet Week San Diego on the Broadway Pier.

*The mission of Fleet Week San Diego is to honor, celebrate, and thank the men and women of the military through public events and alliances that increase public awareness of the many contributions made by the Military and the Defense Community to the San Diego Region. <https://www.fleetweeksandiego.org/>*



## Woman guilty on bribery charge after taking ritzy meals from Navy contractors

by J.P. Lawrence  
Stars and Stripes

A Navy official pleaded guilty recently to a bribery conspiracy charge after accepting free meals at fancy restaurants from two defense contractors who were later awarded millions of dollars in government contracts.

Dawnell Parker, 52, admitted guilt Oct 26 in a plea deal whose terms were not disclosed in public court documents. The sentencing in Southern California federal court is scheduled for January 2024.

Parker accepted thousands of dollars in meals from the contractors while working in contracting at the Naval Information Warfare Center in San Diego, according to court records.

The two unidentified contractors are a Fredericksburg, Va., defense firm and a company with offices in Stafford, Va., and San Diego, the Justice Department said Thursday in a statement.

"Ms. Parker's actions directly undermined the fair competition that ensures our warfighters always have the technological advantage over potential adversaries," Tyler Hatcher, an IRS special agent, said in the Justice Department statement.

Prosecutors said Parker began conspiring with a co-worker to accept the bribes in March 2016.

That's three years after the first arrests in the ongoing "Fat Leonard" investigation, a scandal that has led to guilty verdicts from at least 17 Navy officers and civilians for accepting payouts and gifts from contractor Leonard Glenn Francis.

Parker and her co-worker accepted at least 11 meals valued at almost \$6,000, the plea agreement said.

Parker and her co-worker first accepted a free meal worth more than \$600 at Ruth's Chris Steak House in Arlington, Va., on March

31, 2016.

Days later, Parker served on a board evaluating the contractor. The next day, the company was awarded a roughly \$1 million contract, according to the stipulations in the plea deal.

Other freebies accepted included a \$697 tab at the De Medici Cucina in San Diego, a sushi lunch worth \$852 and another trip to Ruth's Chris Steak House in Arlington for a \$917 meal.

In exchange for the meals, Parker and her co-worker submitted glowing contractor evaluations and gave the company information to help them win bids, the agreement said. In Sept. 2016, the company was awarded a contract worth \$2.1 million over five years.

Another contractor also provided the pair with meals and employed Parker's co-worker's wife, prior to winning a \$47 million contract, the plea agreement said.



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## Senate confirms 1st female leader of Navy, new Air Force top general and Marine Corps 2nd-in-command



**Navy Adm. Lisa Franchetti**



**Air Force Gen. David Allvin**



**Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney**

by Svetlana Shkolnikova  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The Senate voted Nov. 2 to confirm the first woman to lead the Navy and serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a new top general for the Air Force and an assistant Marine Corps commandant as anger intensified over a Republican senator's monthslong hold on military promotions.

Adm. Lisa Franchetti was approved as chief of naval opera-

tions in a 95-1 vote after serving in the position for months on an acting basis while also performing the duties of her former role as vice chief. Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kan., a former Army captain, was the only senator to oppose Franchetti's promotion.

"At every step of her career, Admiral Franchetti has been a trailblazer and a team builder who focuses on the mission, leads by example and gets the job done," said Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., the chairman of the Sen-

ate Armed Services Committee. "She is an inspiration to many and someone who will always put the security of our nation, and all who defend it, first."

Her historic appointment marked the second time since February that the Senate has individually confirmed senior military nominees affected by a nine-month hold on appointments and promotions by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

Gen. David Allvin was ap-

proved as Air Force chief of staff in a 95-1 vote, with Marshall again voting no. Allvin also had been serving a dual role of acting chief of staff of the service as well as vice chief due to the logjam created by Tuberville's hold. Allvin's predecessor, Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, was promoted to chairman of the Joint Chiefs in September.

Senators unanimously voted, 86-0, to approve Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney for promotion to four-star general and appoint-

ment as Marine Corps assistant commandant. He was nominated for the service's second-highest job in July.

The promotion of the three senior officers took on new urgency last week after Gen. Eric Smith, the Marine Corps commandant, reportedly suffered a cardiac arrest. Tuberville's hold, an act of protest against the Pentagon's abortion access policy, had left the service's second-in-command position empty.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Smith's hospitalization coupled with Israel's war in Gaza has created a crisis. He long resisted holding individual votes on nominees, which are normally approved in large batches, but made an exception in September to fill three seats on the Joint Chiefs.

He again moved to break with standard procedure last week after Tuberville and other Republicans tried to force floor votes on Mahoney, Franchetti and Allvin.

"Patience is wearing thin on both sides of the aisle over the senator's actions," Schumer said Nov. 2.

Frustration with Tuberville's

hold publicly spilled into the Republican ranks Nov. 1 as several Republican senators attempted to bring forward the nominations of 61 of the nearly 400 impacted officers. Each request was shot down by Tuberville, though he has repeatedly said he would not stand in the way of individual votes on nominees.

Tuberville offered no explanation for his refusals, visibly angering his fellow Republicans as they spent four hours attempting to break through the blockade.

"We have done the best we can to honor the request of a fellow senator that these nominations be brought to the floor and voted on individually," said Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, who is a retired Army officer. "I really respect men of their word. I don't respect men who don't honor their word."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., stormed off the Senate floor after confronting Tuberville over the extraordinary length of his hold and his decision to punish military personnel for a policy decision made by civilians.

Continue reading at <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-11-02/franchetti-navy-military-promotions-tuberville-senate-11918776.html>.

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NOVEMBER 8, 2023 [www.armyforresdispatch.com](http://www.armyforresdispatch.com) 3

### Top 4

- Forgotten bastards: Battle of Mogadishu's unsung heroes await honors
- In rare announcement, U.S. says guided missile sub has arrived in Middle East, a message of deterrence to adversaries
- VA pauses pension debt collections after discovery of system error
- Navy ships on both coasts to receive flame-retardant uniform in 2024



### Army

- Army seeks industry input for overhaul of aging artillery software
- Fort Cavazos Soldiers test ability to navigate large-scale water crossings
- Army rescues three teenagers in remote part of Alaska
- Collins, King call on Army's inspector general to investigate Lewiston shooter's history

### Navy

- Ford, Ike carrier strike groups exercise in Eastern Mediterranean
- Over 62M gallons of fuel removed from Red Hill
- Next level: Unmanned U.S. Navy boat fires weapons in Middle East for first time
- Ken Mattingly, astronaut who helped Apollo 13 crew return safely home, dies at age 87

### Marine Corps

- Top Marine general 'making excellent progress' after cardiac arrest
- Ex-State Department official sentenced to nearly 6 years in prison for Capitol riot attacks
- Marine vet pleads guilty to weapons charge in neo-Nazi power grid plot

### Air Force

- How the Air Force builds special reconnaissance commandos
- ICBM test failure puts nuclear modernization effort into focus

### National Guard

- Col. Amy Klima takes command of Nevada's largest national guard brigade

### Your Military

- Troops' best defense against fraud is in jeopardy, advocates warn
- Army reservist was alive for most of 2-day search after Maine shooting
- U.S. flying drones over Gaza in search of hostages
- Activists against Israeli bombings block U.S. military ship at Port of Oakland

## DOD launches new landing page to celebrate Nat'l Veterans and Military Families Month

This month, the Defense Department is launching a 2023 National Veterans and Military Families Month landing page on Military OneSource. The new, easily-accessible page is part of the Department's recognition of the national observance month, which celebrates the sacrifices and contributions of service members, veterans and military families.



financial support, spouse employment, and consultations for transitioning veterans

The page displays a wide range of resources and support for military families and transitioning veterans, signaling the Department's priority to take care of service members and families, officials stated. Page features include information about: parenting, adoption and foster care, relationships, caring for a family member with special needs, resources for gold star and surviving family members,

"Our nation's service members and transitioning veterans do not – and did not – serve alone. Alongside them are the dedicated members of their families, whose commitment and resolve strengthen our nation," said Patricia Montes Barron, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Military Community and Family Policy. "We are committed to taking care of our service members and their families just as our military families take care of those who

serve, and as our veterans have cared for us through their service to our country."

The 2023 National Veterans and Military Families Month landing page is accessible at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting/family-life/military-family-appreciation/>.

### Veteran continued from page 1

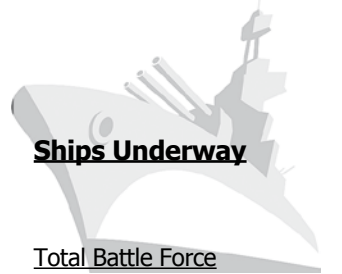
Through WWP, Claude has found his new purpose — mentoring other warriors through the Peer Support program. "Everyone I mentor is unique," says Claude. "But they all have one thing in common — their hearts and minds are reacting to abnormal experiences."

Today, Claude serves as a civilian helicopter pilot for the

Military OneSource is a DOD-funded program that is both a call center and a website providing comprehensive information, resources and assistance on every aspect of military life.

Maryland State Police and remains passionate about helping his fellow wounded warriors.

"I know what it's like to be in a hospital bed, unable to move, to be carried, pushed in a wheelchair, struggle to stand, and struggle even more to step. Recovery is an emotional roller coaster ride. Often, warriors don't want to reach out for help. That's why I make it a point to reach out to them."



**Ships Underway**

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291 (USS 232, USNS 59)  
Deployed  
107 (USS 74, USNS 33)  
Underway  
85 (57 Deployed, 28 Local)

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Jim W. Balze, Pastor [www.fbcoronado.com](http://www.fbcoronado.com)  
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Meeting in person and online on YouTube or Facebook  
FB: First Baptist Church of Coronado email: secretary@fbcoronado.com  
445 C Ave., Coronado, CA 92118 (619) 435-6588

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Wednesday Night Bible Study 7pm  
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[www.RL.church](http://www.RL.church)  
Church (619) 435-1000 • Preschool (619) 435-0286

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Phone: (619) 463-6633  
website: [www.st-lukes-la-mesa.org](http://www.st-lukes-la-mesa.org)  
Worship: 9am  
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## NAVY LIFE SW NAVY Region Southwest

### PERSONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FFSC CLASS SCHEDULE

If you're interested in attending one of these classes, call the Centralized Scheduling Center at 866-923-6478.  
Legend: (V) Virtual (IP) In Person (NBSD) Naval Base San Diego (NBPL) Naval Base Point Loma (NBC) Naval Base Coronado (KMB) Kearny Mesa Branch (GVB) Gateway Village Branch (VSM) Village at Serra Mesa Branch (BVH) Bayview Hills Branch

**Credit Management:** Building and maintaining credit can be an important tool for financial success. This course will provide you with the knowledge about establishing healthy credit, the impact and cost of credit and tips for debt recovery.

Tuesday, Nov. 14 | 2-3 p.m. | (V)

**Debt Destroyer:** This course is designed to empower you and your family to get out-and stay out-of debt

Thursday, Dec. 21 | 1-2 p.m. | BVH (IP)

**Holiday Spending:** Learn how to plan for the added expenses of holidays and special events and develop strategies to avoid overspending and accumulating excessive debt.

Wednesday, Nov. 29 | 10-11 a.m. | GVB (IP)

**Home Buying Workshop:** This course is designed to increase the knowledge and comfort level of first-time home buyers and serve as a refresher for repeat home buyers.

Friday, Dec. 1 | 1-3 p.m. | KMB (IP)

**Million Dollar Sailor/Spouse Workshop:** Proven strategies address topics such as banking and financial services, military pay, planning for your retirement, home buying, savvy consumerism, car buying, insurance and Thrift Savings Plan.

Thursday-Friday, Nov. 16-17 | 8 a.m.-4 p.m. | NBSD (IP)

**Money and the Move:** A PCS move can be stressful financial time for Sailors. This curriculum provides useful strategies and tips to help service members address financial considerations for this Touchpoint.

Thursday, Nov. 30 | 10-11 a.m. | BVH (IP)

**Planning Your Financial Future:** Setting goals that are strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely - or "SMART" - is key to achieving success.

Wednesday, Nov. 29 | 10-11:30 a.m. | NBSD (IP)

**Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP):** Provides basic information on the key provisions of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). This information will assist service members and their spouses in making informed decisions about SBP's role in their retirement plan.

Tuesday, Nov. 21 | 10-11 a.m. | (V)

**Thrift Savings Plan/Blended Retirement System:** Get the latest detailed information on the Thrift Savings Plan and how it can contribute to financial retirement security.

Friday, Nov. 17 | 10-11 a.m. | NBC (IP)

FIND more available classes at <https://sandiego.navylifesw.com/fleet-family/support-center/ffsc-classes>.

## Over the hill at age 42? Not for Air Force enlistment

by Jennifer H. Svan  
Stars and Stripes

Forty is the new 30 when it comes to the Air Force and Space Force.

Men and women as old as 42 can now pack their boots and bifocals for basic training, under a policy change that gives the two services the highest age limit for recruits of all the military branches except the Coast Guard.

The previous maximum age for Air Force recruits was 39, a change authorized in 2014, when the service raised its enlisted accessions age limit from 27.

Raising the cutoff by three years aligns the Air Force and the Space Force with the maximum enlistment age allowed by the Pentagon. It also comes amid a recruitment crunch.

The Air Force announced last month that it will miss its active-duty recruiting goal by about 10 percent, its first recruitment shortfall since 1999. The service fell about 2,700 applicants short of its fiscal year 2023 goal of 26,877.

An Air Force memo dated

Tuesday that was posted on the service's website outlines the policy change for both officers and enlisted members.

Comments posted Thursday on the Reddit Air Force channel poked fun at the idea of "middle-aged" recruits.

"42?! Dudes will be enlisting at the age I'm eligible for retirement!" said one comment.

"Just in time for the mid life crisis Dodge Challenger!" said another.

But the Air Force isn't the only service opening the door to graying enlistees.

In November 2022, the Coast Guard raised its maximum enlisted age from 35 to 42 and increased the maximum direct commission aviator age from 34 to 36.

The increases in the upper age limit were among other new eligibility standards approved to make it easier to recruit qualified candidates in a tight labor market, the service said at the time.

That same month, the Navy raised the maximum age for re-

cruits from 39 to 41 to help with similar recruiting struggles. The Army accepts recruits up to the age of 39, though it may grant waivers for people as old as 45. The Marine Corps' cutoff age is a spry 28.

In 2006, Congress changed the maximum age for all enlisted military recruits from 35 to 42. From 2007 to 2016, the Army's maximum enlistment age was set at 42 to sustain demand for the surge in the war in Iraq, according to a paper by the Rand Corp. think tank.

Published in April, the paper suggested that the Army should consider raising the maximum enlistment age again to boost recruitment numbers.

Previous Rand studies found that compared to younger soldiers, older recruits have higher qualification test scores and higher levels of education, and also are more likely to get promoted and reenlist.

One of those studies compared recruits ages 25 to 35 with those in their teens. Another study, however, did not specify what ages qualified as "older" and "younger."

## --- COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN ---

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# DAV Charitable Service Trust



in grants were awarded throughout the United States in 2022.

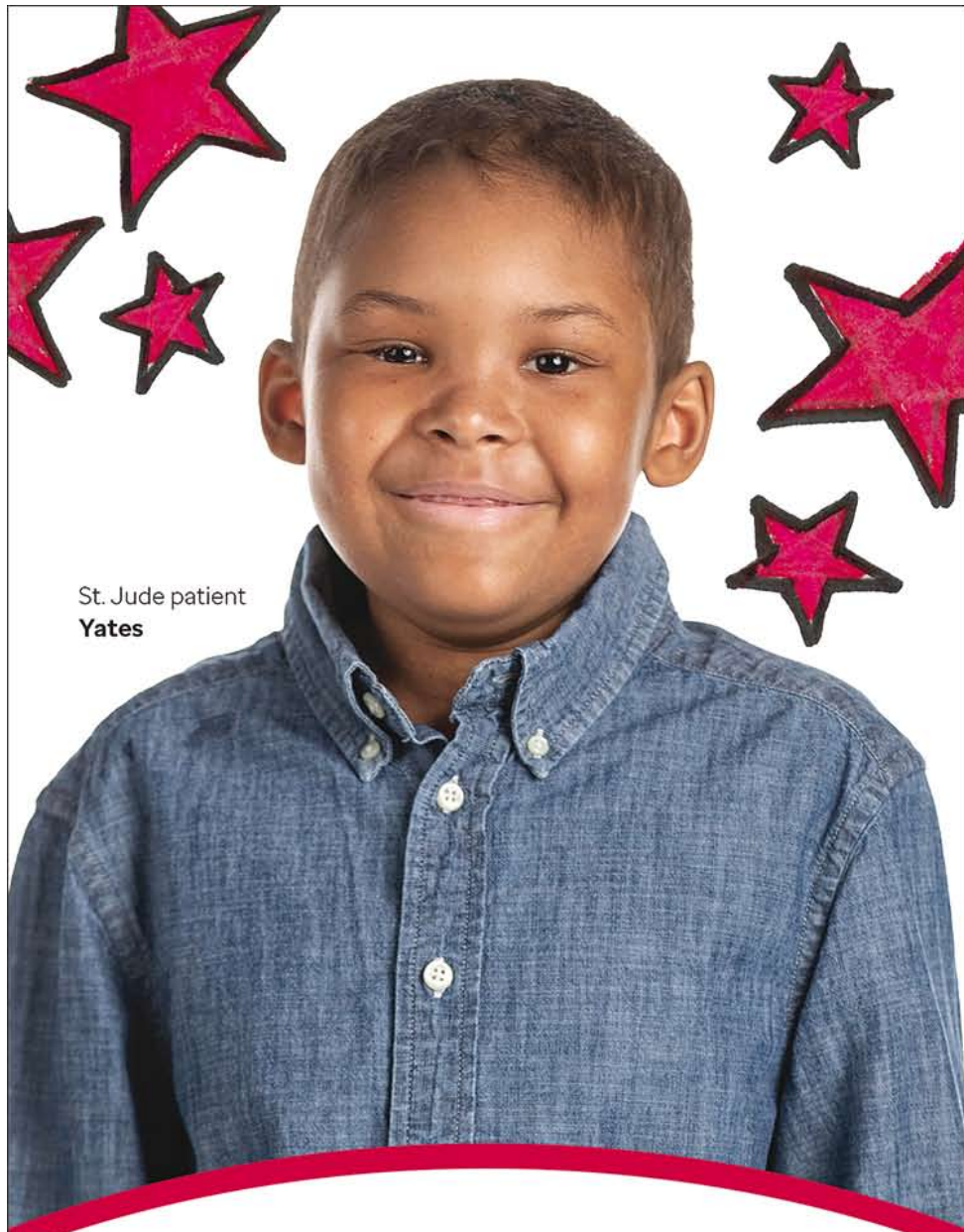
More than **95 cents** out of every dollar donated directly supports programs that help veterans and their families.



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Art inspired by St. Jude patient **Amber**

©2023 ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (MCC-15341)

## Local Military

### Destroyer Dewey asserts navigational rights in the South China Sea

**S**PRATLY ISLANDS, South China Sea - On Nov. 3, destroyer *Dewey* asserted navigational rights and freedoms here, consistent with international law. At the conclusion of the operation, *Dewey* exited the excessive claim area and continued operations in the South China Sea.

This freedom of navigation operation, or FONOP, upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging restrictions on innocent passage imposed by the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

The PRC, Vietnam, and Taiwan each claim the entirety of the Spratly Islands, while the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei also claim certain features. The PRC, Vietnam and Taiwan each require either permission or advance notification before a military vessel or warship engages in "innocent passage" through their territorial sea, in violation of international law. Under customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention, the ships of all States - including their warships - enjoy the right of innocent passage through a territorial sea. The unilateral imposition of any authorization or advance-notification requirement for innocent passage in unlawful. By

engaging in innocent passage without giving prior notification to or asking permission from any of the claimants, the United States challenged these unlaw-



**Ensign Nicole Choi looks through a telescopic alidade on the bridge of USS Dewey. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Greg Johnson**

ful restrictions imposed by the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The United States demonstrated that innocent passage is not subject to such restrictions.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unim-

peded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations.

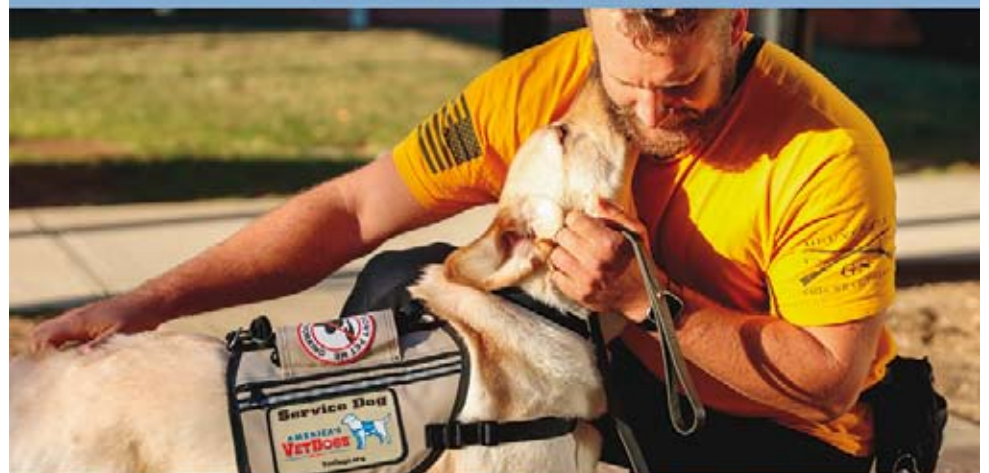
The U.S. challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. Customary international law reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention protects certain rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea enjoyed by all nations. The international community has an enduring role in preserving the freedom of the seas, which is critical to global security, stability, and prosperity.

The United States upholds freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle. As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the U.S. will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all. No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms.

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## USS *Oakland* joins Unmanned Surface Vessel Division in Sydney

From the Fleet Public Affairs SYDNEY, Australia - Unmanned Surface Vessel Division One's vessels *Ranger*, *Mariner*, *Seahawk* and *Sea Hunter* made a port visit in Sydney, Australia, late last month ahead of bilateral exercise with the Royal Australian Navy.

in concert with industry partners to advance a shared understanding of these capabilities to meet strategic requirements.

"Our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific relies upon developing these advanced capabilities that will create the asymmetric warfighting advantages to deter aggression in contested environments," said

During the exercise, the two navies tested unmanned systems

### GIVE HAPPY



Unmanned surface vessel *Mariner* transits underneath the Sydney Harbor bridge as part of a port visit during Integrated Battle Problem 23.2, Oct 24. U.S. Navy photo by Ensign Pierson Hawkins

said U.S. Navy Commander Jeremiah Daley, commanding officer of USVDIV-1.

Along with the USVs, littoral combat ship *USS Oakland* also arrived in Sydney. All five Navy vessels were employed in the recently-completed U.S. Pacific Fleet exercise Integrated Battle Problem 23.2 to develop concepts of operations for future unmanned programs of record and further integrated USVs into routine operations alongside manned surface combatants.

"In order to develop a program as different and disruptive as small, medium, and large USVs, integrating with allies and partners early and consistently

in its development is key to our success," said Daley. "Through exercises like IBP 23.2 and Autonomous Warrior, we continue to learn from experience in an operational theater and deepen our interoperable strength."

USVDIV-1's mission is to test, evaluate and operate in support of integrating USVs into fleet operations and provide recommendations to Navy leadership on the development of unmanned systems.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

## USS TRIPOLI NEWS



USS TRIPOLI, in port (Nov. 2, 2023) Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group Three, Rear Adm. Randall Peck, left, Capt. John Kiefaber, center, and Capt. Gary A. Harrington II, commanding officer of amphibious assault carrier *Tripoli*, bow their heads for the benediction during a change of command ceremony here. Harrington relieved Kiefaber. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Olivia Rucker

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Access the system at <https://cfcgiving.opm.gov/welcome>.

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**USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, at sea (Oct. 26, 2023)** Sailors enjoy a birthday dinner hosted on the mess decks of aircraft carrier **USS Abraham Lincoln**. The carrier is underway conducting routine operations in the Pacific U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Thaddeus Berry



**SAN DIEGO (Oct. 26, 2023)** U.S. Customs and Border Protection Senior Official Performing the Duties of Commissioner **Troy A. Miller** speaks on the agency's strategy to counter fentanyl during a press conference at the San Ysidro Port of Entry. U.S. CBP photo by Jaime Rodriguez

**SAN DIEGO (Oct. 24, 2023)** Rear Adm. Bradley Andros, commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, presents The Cmdr. Kevin P. Childre Excellence Award to Lt. Carey Peekstok of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Training and Evaluation Unit One. The award recognizes an outstanding senior enlisted or EOD officer who epitomizes the community's ethos and excellence in leadership while serving in a training role. U. S. Navy photo by Lt.j.g. Rae Timberlake



## USNS Robert F. Kennedy christened as MSC's newest ship

by Sarah Cannon

SAN DIEGO - Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208), the Military Sealift Command's newest ship, was christened during a ceremony at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard here Oct. 30.

"When we christen this ship, we're recognizing the tenacity and the spirit of Robert Kennedy," said Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House Emerita, U.S. House of Representatives.

The ship honors Robert F. Kennedy, an American lawyer and politician who served as the 64th United States Attorney General from January 1961 to September 1964, during his brother John F. Kennedy's presidency, where he advocated for the civil rights movement, fought against organized crime and the Mafia, and involvement in U.S. foreign policy related to Cuba. Following his tenure as

Attorney General, he served as a U.S. Senator from New York. In 1968, Robert Kennedy was considered a frontrunner for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. During a campaign event in Los Angeles, in June of that year, he was assassinated. A prominent member of the Democratic Party, Robert Kennedy has come to be viewed by some historians as an icon of modern American liberalism.

"Like the other great American leaders honored by the ships of this class, Robert F. Kennedy contributed much to the freedoms we enjoy today," said Steven Cade, executive director MSC during his remarks. "A champion of equality who sought to eliminate disparity and close opportunity gaps that plagued our nation during his lifetime. We are very proud to be associated with and eagerly look forward to sailing a ship in his name."

The ship was officially christened,

when Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Robert Kennedy's oldest child and ship's sponsor, broke the ceremonial bottle of champagne against the ship's hull.

"The Navy is a fighting force and a force for peace," said Kennedy Townsend. "It's fitting that the Secretary of the Navy named a class of ship after civil rights leaders like my father."

The 746 foot Kennedy is the fourth ship in the John Lewis-class previously known as the TAO(X). This class of oilers can carry 162,000 barrels of diesel ship fuel, aviation fuel and dry stores cargo. The upgraded oiler is built with double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks, and will be equipped with a basic self-defense capability, including crew served weapons, degaussing, and Nixie Torpedo decoys, and has space, weight, and power reservations for Close In Weapon Systems.



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# Navy carries out another multi-carrier exercise, this time with Japan in the Philippine Sea

by Alex Wilson  
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD USS CARL VINSON IN THE PHILIPPINE SEA - The roar and rumble of fighter jets began early Nov. 5 and carried on steadily through the night, part of a joint U.S.-Japan drill meant to showcase the two nations as a "cornerstone of peace and deterrence" in the region.

Dubbed a "multiple large deck event" by the Navy, the exercise included aircraft carriers USS *Ronald Reagan* and USS *Carl Vinson*, the Japanese helicopter carrier JS *Hyuga*, approximately 150 aircraft and more than 10,000 Sailors in a demonstration of air and naval

power in the Indo-Pacific.

But despite its scale, the U.S. Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force repeatedly emphasized the training's routine nature.

"The capabilities that you will see - and will not see - assembled here is indeed impressive; it is also somewhat routine," Rear Adm. Pat Hannifin, commander of Carrier Strike Group 5, told reporters gathered Nov. 6 aboard *Ronald Reagan*. "We can, and do, bring together bilateral and multilateral forces of this size, breadth and capability many times each year across the Indo-Pacific."

Scheduled to run until an undisclosed time this week, the exercise began Nov. 4 about 500 to 700 nautical miles east of Luzon, Philippines, Carrier Strike Group 5 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig told *Stars and Stripes* by e-mail Nov. 7.

That places the flotilla roughly 800 nautical miles southeast of Taiwan.

China often criticizes U.S.-led exercises in the Philippine Sea and the adjacent South China Sea as aggressive and counteractive to peace in the region. Beijing claims nearly all the South China Sea as its territorial waters.

The U.S. and Japan, on the other hand, say their presence preserves freedom of movement through the area.

The issue is a case of the "eye of the beholder," Hannifin said, adding that both the U.S. and Japan have been operating and training in the region for decades.

"To fly, sail and operate everywhere that international law allows is what ensures that flying, sailing and operating and free trade across this region is maintained," he told reporters. "I would suggest it is not, certainly not, provocation. This is a standard and a normal exercise of our individual nations' capabilities."

Hannifin added that the exercise is not aimed at deterring any specific nation, but rather to indicate the capabilities of the U.S. and its allies to "any potential adversary, regardless of who they are."

The Chinese aircraft carrier Shandong, along with two destroyers, a frigate and a support ship, were operating several hundred miles away in the South China Sea as of Nov. 5, Japan's Joint Staff said in a news release Nov. 6.

On Nov. 5, the flight decks and below-decks hangars on *Ronald Reagan* and *Carl Vinson* were buzzing with activity.

Pilots flew scores of sorties aimed at honing air-defense and

air-combat skills while the escort warships practiced coordinated maneuvers and maritime strike drills. Meanwhile, U.S. and Japanese sailors swapped places to learn more about their counterparts.

That pace hardly slowed as night fell on Sunday. Aboard *Carl Vinson*, F-18 Super Hornet and F-35 Lightning II fighter jets continued to launch and land, while mechanics labored away in

the ship's massive hangar.

Exercises like this are "demanding," but the crew is more than capable of handling it, Petty Officer 2nd Class Rowland Smith told *Stars and Stripes* aboard *Carl Vinson* on Sunday.

"A big challenge is definitely the temperature," he said, referring to the hot and humid hangars he works in.

## Fire burns former Tustin Air Base hangar, part of Orange County's military history

In a report by NBC Los Angeles, fire destroyed a historic World War II-era hangar early morning on Nov. 7 at the former Tustin Air Base that was a significant part of Orange County's military history.



Courtesy photo of World War II-era hangar at the former Tustin Air Base.

The fire was reported at about 1:30 a.m. Tuesday near Valencia Avenue and Armstrong Road, where flames were shooting through the roof of the towering wooden hangar. Parts of the roof fell to the ground, and firefighters took up positions outside the hanger, which is typically empty, due to the threat of collapse.

The fire authority called in a helicopter to help fight the fire, something fire officials said was unheard of. The Chinook helicopters are used to fight wildfires.

Details about a cause were not immediately available. No injuries were reported.

"We have determined the most operationally sound method is to allow the structure to collapse, at which point ground crews can move in closer, and aggressively work to extinguish the fire," the Orange County Fire Authority tweeted.

The fire is in hangars that once housed blimps used in World War II. They stand 17 stories high, are over 1,000 feet long and 300 feet wide. They were, and still are, two of the largest wooden structures ever built, according to the website Tustin Hangars.

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## VA survey on Vet Centers

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has approached the Fleet Reserve Association requesting the opportunity to offer a survey to its members regarding Vet Centers. The VA is currently conducting a survey aimed at measuring the awareness and comprehension of the services offered by the agency at Vet Centers. Responses to this survey will remain anonymous and will be utilized to evaluate the extent of awareness concerning Vet Centers and to identify any potential obstacles that individuals may encounter when seeking services. FRA members have the option to participate in the survey at <https://survey.voice.va.gov/?acDk8c-RCS-Awareness>. Your feedback and insights are highly valued as they contribute to the enhancement of services for veterans.

## Senate passes spending measures for FY 2024

The Senate recently approved three of the 12 Appropriations bills by a vote of 85-12. The package encompasses appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs and military construction. Notably, this bill allocates over \$120 billion for VA medical care for the upcoming fiscal year. Appropriators have praised the bill for its historic increases in funding for military construction and family housing projects. It earmarks \$1.9 billion for enhancing and maintaining housing for service members and their families. The bill provides \$112.6 billion in advance discretionary funding for veterans' health care in FY 2025 and \$193 billion in advance mandatory funding for veterans' benefits in FY 2025. The next step for this bill is consideration in the House.



### ● The San Diego Veterans Day Parade

An annual event honoring those who served past and present. Thousands of residents & community leaders will line the parade route on Sunday, Nov. 12 beginning 11 a.m. to pay tribute to America's heroes – the veterans of our Armed Forces.

### ● Veterans Day Parade Starting Point

Location: Harbor Drive (In front of the County Admin Building)  
Directions from East County

Take I-8 West to Highway 163-South. Continue on 163 into downtown and make a right on Broadway. Continue down Broadway to the parade along Harbor Dr.

Directions from North County

Take I-5 South and exit Front St. Make a right at Broadway. Continue down Broadway to the parade along Harbor Dr.

Directions from South Bay

Take I-5 North and exit on 6th Ave. Take a left on 6th Ave. Continue down 6th to Broadway. Make a right on Broadway and continue down to the parade site.

## Fleet Reserve Association NewsByte: Pact Act update

As authorized by the Comprehensive Veterans' Toxic Exposure Act (PACT Act), Sept. 30, 2023, marked the end of the one-year special enrollment period for post-9/11 combat veterans who left active duty between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013.

September 2023 was one of the largest months ever for the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare enrollments, with overall enrollments reaching 48,763. This number is nearly double the enrollment numbers for September 2022 and represents the second-highest month of enrollments in VA's history.

On average, it takes 154.3 days to complete a PACT Act claim. The Federal Review

Agency wants the VA to have no disability claims pending for over 125 days, and all claims should have an accuracy rate of 98 percent or higher. However, only 46.8 percent of PACT Act-related claims are being completed in 125 days or less.

The VA reports that more than 4.7 million vets have received toxic exposure screenings (September 6, 2022 - October 22, 2023). The PACT Act allows all patients visiting VA healthcare facilities to undergo toxic exposure screenings to detect signs of illness and inform veterans that they may qualify for new benefits.

The five-minute screening includes a series of simple questions regarding veterans' time

in service, potential exposure to toxic substances, and current health status. Veterans will undergo the screening during their initial visit but will not repeat the questions during follow-up appointments. Officials plan to conduct the screening for every patient once every five years.

In a related story, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chair Jon Tester (Mont.), along with other members, are urging the VA for an explanation regarding their misguided use of the critical skill incentive, or CSI, authority in the Comprehensive Veterans' Toxic Exposure Law.

In a letter addressed to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, the leaders of the committees expressed their disappointment

with the VA's misuse of the CSI authority. They stated, "Contrary to congressional intent, incentives were used to boost the pay of senior executives at VA rather than enhancing staffing for critical shortage positions requiring highly skilled individuals."

To ensure that the VA could effectively handle the increased demand for care and benefits from newly-eligible toxic-exposed vets, the PACT Act included provisions to strengthen the VA's workforce capacity. This included the CSI authority, which was designed to improve staffing for positions that demand critical or high-demand skills essential for the day-to-day operations at the VA.

Refer to <https://www.fra.org/fra/>.

## Valhall Lodge, Sons of Norway invite you to LUTEFISK & MEATBALLS DINNER

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# Check before you go: Veterans Day discounts and freebies

On Veterans Day, businesses across the nation offer their thanks by providing a discount or a free meal to veterans and military service members.

Please verify discount with the business before you go. Independently-owned franchises may not participate so call ahead to ensure your store is participating.

For discounts businesses may require proof of service, such as military ID or DD-214. Membership cards for veteran service organizations and state-issued IDs with veteran designation. Ask before you go!

## Food

### Applebee's Veterans Day Free Meal

Veterans and active-duty military can select a free meal from a limited menu on Veterans Day. Proof of service is required.

**BJ's Restaurant** On Veterans Day, all service members can enjoy a complimentary meal plus a free Dr. Pepper by presenting a military ID or proof of service.

**Black Angus Steakhouse** is proud to support the military community and honor those that have served. Active military, veterans and their spouses enjoy a 15% discount when you dine-in at our restaurants.

**Bruegger's Bagels Veterans Day Deal** Veterans can grab a free medium fresh-brewed hot or iced coffee with their breakfast on Veterans Day.

**Buffalo Wild Wings** All day on Veterans Day, veterans and active-duty military who dine in at

their local B-Dubs can receive a free order of boneless wings and a side of fries. At participating U.S. locations only.

**California Pizza Kitchen** All veterans or active-duty military personnel will be able to select a free entrée from a special Veterans Day menu including pizza, salads and pasta. Please come in uniform or bring your military ID or other proof of service.

**Chick-fil-A** Some participating Chick-fil-A locations may offer specials or discounts. Check your local Chick-fil-A to confirm.

**Chili's Grill & Bar** All vets and active-duty military personnel can choose a complimentary meal from a select menu.

**Cicis Pizza** Free adult buffet with valid active-duty or retired military ID on Veterans Day.

**Circle K** is offering all veterans and active military with a free medium coffee.

**Claim Jumper** Veterans who show valid ID may receive a free entrée from a special menu and a \$5 bounce-back card for the next visit. This offer is valid for dine-in only at participating restaurants.

**Coco's Restaurant Veterans Day Deal** All veterans and active-duty military receive a free slice of pie with proof of service. Plus buy one, get one free entrée for breakfast, lunch or dinner on Veterans Day. Coco's offers a 10% military discount to all active duty and retired military members every day for in-store purchases.

**Cracker Barrel** During military family appreciation month, Cracker Barrel will offer in-store specials on Veterans Day for military vet-

erans and promotions throughout November to support military families in partnership with Operation Homefront. On Veterans Day, veterans can receive a free slice of double fudge Coca-Cola cake with their meal.

**Denny's Veterans Day Deal** All active, non-active or retired military personnel at all participating Denny's restaurants nationwide will receive a free build-your-own grand slam breakfast on Veterans Day 5 a.m.-noon. Diners must show ID to receive this offer.

**Dunkin' Donuts** On Nov. 11, Dunkin' Donuts is offering a complimentary donut to active-duty military and veterans. The offer is limited to one donut per person, available in-store, with no purchase or military ID needed. It's advisable to check with local Dunkin' Donuts locations for participation.

**Einstein Bros. Bagels Veterans Day Deal** Free hot or iced coffee of any size with purchase when veterans show their ID inside each bakery location.

**Famous Dave's** On Veterans Day, all former and current military personnel will receive a free Georgia chopped pork sandwich plus a side. Dine-in or to go.

**Farmer Boys** On Nov. 11, Farmer Boys offers veterans a complimentary Big Cheese cheeseburger. It's recommended to verify participation with your local Farmer Boys. Proof of service is required when ordering, and the offer is not available for delivery or mobile orders.

**Fogo de Chao** Active-duty military and veterans enjoy 50% off their meal, plus an additional 10%

off for up to three guests.

**Golden Corral Military Appreciation Night** On Monday, Nov. 13, from 5 p.m. to close, active and former military members are invited for Military Appreciation Night, where they can receive a complimentary meal. This offer is for dine-in only.

**Hard Rock Cafe Military Discount** Present your valid military ID to receive your 15% military discount on all food, beverage (non-alcoholic), and retail purchases through Veterans Advantage.

**Hooters** On Nov. 11, veterans and active-duty military can enjoy a complimentary dinner entrée from the Hooters Veterans Day Menu upon presenting proof of service or a military ID and purchasing a beverage. This offer is for dine-in only and is available at participating Hooters locations.

**IHOP Veterans Day Deal** On Nov. 11, veterans and active-duty military can enjoy free Red, White & Blueberry Pancakes at participating locations. Dine-in only with military ID or proof of service. One per guest; restrictions apply.

**Ikea** Enjoy a free meal at Ikea on Veterans Day at participating locations. Military ID required.

**Joe's Crab Shack** On Veterans Day, all vets can enjoy 20% off. Valid for parties up to four.

**Krispy Kreme** On Veterans Day, a doughnut and coffee will be on the house.

**Little Caesars Pizza** On Veterans Day, veterans and active military members can receive a free lunch combo, which features four slices of Little Caesars popular Detroit-style deep-dish pizza, paired with a 20-ounce Pepsi product.

**Luna Grill** offers a year-round discount of 10% off your entire purchase, excluding alcohol. Valid in-restaurant only with valid ID or uniform required.

**Macaroni Grill** Veterans Day, all veterans and active military receive a free mom's ricotta meatballs + spaghetti with military ID.

**McCormick & Schmick's** Veterans and Gold Star families (parents and spouses) can enjoy a half-priced lunch or dinner at McCormick and Schmick's.

**Melting Pot** Veterans eat for free on Veterans Day at select Melting Pot locations with the purchase of

regular-priced four-course meals. Veterans must show military IDs.

**Menchie's** On Veterans Day, Menchie's Frozen Yogurt offers veterans the first 6 oz. of frozen yogurt at no cost. This promotion is available at participating locations with the presentation of a military ID.

**Mimi's Cafe** is offering 20% off for veterans and their families.

**Morton's The Steakhouse** All current and former military members enjoy 20% off on Veterans Day. Valid for parties up to four. Must show valid ID.

**Nekter Juice Bar** is giving Free 16 oz Juices and Smoothies to Veterans and Active Duty Military all day long at participating locations.

**Olive Garden** This Veterans Day, Olive Garden is offering veterans and active-duty service members a free entree from a special menu. All entrees include Olive Garden's famous breadsticks.

**On the Border** Veterans, retired and active-duty military will receive a free pick-two combo meal.

**Outback Steakhouse** Veterans Day Deal, all military veterans and active service members can enjoy a free bloomin' onion and Coca-Cola.

**Pilot Flying J/U.S. Pilot** Veterans Day Deal. All active-duty and retired military veterans get a free breakfast including a coffee. Offer is available via the app.

**Red Lobster** On Veterans Day, veterans, active-duty military and reservists, offered a free Walt's Favorite Shrimp, Fries, and Coleslaw, featuring six hand-breaded, butter-fried and lightly fried shrimp, served with cocktail sauce, as well as crispy French Fries and Coleslaw.

**Red Robin Veterans Day Deal** Veterans and active-duty military get a free Red's Tavern Double when dining in. This classic burger also comes with free refills of Bottomless Steak Fries.

**Smashburger** Veterans and active-duty military get a free double classic smash on Veterans Day.

**Smoothie King** Free 20-ounce smoothie with a military ID on Veterans Day.

**Starbucks** On Veterans Day, active-duty service members, veterans and military spouses are invit-

ed to enjoy a free tall (12-ounce) hot or iced coffee.

**TCBY** First six-ounces are free for veterans and active military.

**Texas de Brazil** Veterans receive 25% off dinner for Veterans Day.

**Texas Roadhouse Veterans Day Free Meal** Texas Roadhouse will distribute meal vouchers from 11 am - 2 pm. Vouchers can be redeemed for a dine in or carry out meal from a select menu. Contact your local Texas Roadhouse for details.

**TCBY** First six-ounces are free for veterans and active military on Veterans Day.

**Uno's Pizzeria** On Veterans Day, all past and present military members get a free entrée.

**Wienerschnitzel** Veterans Day Deal free chili dog with a small fry and a small Pepsi to veterans and active-duty service members. Bring your military ID.

**Wendy's** nationwide are offering active military and veterans a free breakfast combo with valid military ID on Veterans Day. No purchase is necessary.

**Yard House** Vets and active-duty military will receive a complimentary appetizer on Veterans Day with a valid military ID. The offer is valid for dine-in only.

## Stuff

**Bass Pro Shops** are proud to honor military servicemembers and veterans with their Legendary Salute - a 5% discount available every day, both online and in-store. The 5% discount is also now available on firearms and ammunition and can be combined with other sales and promotions (excluding things like boats, ATVs, Tractors, and other large vehicles). Bass Pro Shops will be increasing their military discount to **10% for Veterans Day, running from 11/10 - 11/13.**

**AAFES Veterans Day Deal** The Exchange will feature one-day-only specials on Veterans Day, including a free coffee for all shoppers at Express and participating Exchange restaurant locations. The Exchange will also feature deals in stores and online at [ShopMyExchange.com](http://ShopMyExchange.com).

**Microsoft** offers up to 10% off select products for active, former, and retired military personnel and their families. Delivery supported to APO/FPO.

**SeaWorld San Diego** Veterans and active duty military receive location-based discounts or free admission. The program doesn't include Aquatica, SeaWorld's Waterpark.

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## The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by  
Lisa  
Smith  
Molinari

The opponent's stadium lights blazed sizzling white that balmy fall Florida Friday night. Our son — a sophomore at his new high school since we'd PCSed from Germany over the summer — was the second string center on the visiting football team. The chance of him seeing any playtime were only slightly better than the odds of me winning the Powerball.

And I never buy lottery tickets.

Coming into the game, the opponent was ranked 14th in the state and 117 nationally. They hadn't lost yet. Their state-of-the-art, 15-acre athletic complex looked like the high school football Taj Mahal. Emblazoned across their press box, which was so big we suspected it had a cocktail bar in it, were banners reading "District Champions," "State Playoffs," and "Regional Champs." It was the kind of place that Division I college recruiters have on their travel itineraries.

Our high school, on the other hand, was a public magnet on nine dilapidated acres in the middle of the worst inner-city neighborhood in Jacksonville. Due to the great emphasis placed on advanced academics, funding for athletics was minimal. None of the school's graduates were headed for the pros, unless by "professional" one means doctor, lawyer, architect or engineer.

Thanks to the lack of funding, the

## A lesson for losers

football team was barely able to afford jerseys. The field was a lumpy crabgrass plot in the center of an ancient six-lane running track that had been deemed unsafe for competitive use. The cross country and track teams were bussed to other school's facilities for practices and meets. On the home team side of the field sat aging bleacher seating, a rudimentary press box with a cracked speaker system, and a stand-alone concessions shack with two working outlets. The visiting team's fans were relegated to dented bleachers pushed up against a chain link fence.

Our team's only practice equipment, one sled and one chute, had long been abandoned as unsafe, and stood corroding in a corner with tall weeds growing around and through their rusted edges. A weathered scoreboard overlooked it all, rendered useless by the inoperability of one-third of its bulbs.

My husband and I, wearing our Stanton Blue Devils t-shirts, ogled the opposing team's fancy digital scoreboard as we found our stadium seats before kick off. With an 0-5 football team comprised of math geeks, computer nerds, avid readers and Eagle scouts, we knew they were about to get creamed.

Our opponents scored two touchdowns in the first four minutes of the game, and by the half, we were losing 7 to 50. In the second half, they put in their second stringers, giving us a bit of respite from the slaughter.

In the fourth quarter, Francis and I noticed a familiar number out on the field. Was that our son? I knocked my boiled peanuts over jumping to

my feet, and my husband fumbled for his camera. We couldn't believe our eyes, and wondered if our son might actually be a part of a miracle comeback play.

Just then, we saw the ball skim across the turf as the players scrambled. Bad snap. Fumble. Turnover.

Please Lord, make it stop.

Our son took his seat back on the bench, and the Blue Devils lost the game 64 to 7.

Many famous sports figures throughout history have been quoted on the character-building aspects of losing. "Winning isn't everything . . ." they've said. "It's not whether you win or lose . . ." they've said. "When at first you don't succeed . . ." they've said.

Whatever.

The first time a team loses, it was just a fluke. The second time they lose, they vow to learn from it. The third time, they say it only makes them stronger. But after that, they're just bitter. Really, really bitter.

The Blue Devils never won a game that football season. Or the next. Consistently losing didn't teach our son any valuable life lessons. But he did learn that there's a silver lining to being a military brat: No matter how bad life gets, it's only temporary. Before our son's senior year, we moved again, this time to Rhode Island, where our son's football team won a few games.

Winning wasn't everything, and it wasn't the only thing. But it sure was nice.

AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

The newest exhibit at the Fleet Science Center explores the underlying science behind light that we can and cannot see (infrared and ultraviolet), color, darkness and optics. Hands-on exhibits explore the visible light spectrum, optics, the effects of mixing colors and the concept that colors are created by reflected light.

Flashing lights simulate fireflies, insects also known as lightning bugs. Part of their abdomen is bioluminescent, meaning it produces and emits light. This helps females identify males of the same species to mate with. Bioluminescence is used for many other purposes, including communication, to attract prey and to deter predators.

At "Touch the Spring," you will see how light has direction. As you peer into a hole you will see a spring, but when you put your hand into that hole, it passes right through the spring — so where is the image of the spring coming from? Its light travels straight down from its source above. We cannot see that light because our eyes are not in the light's path, just like in a movie theater where you only see the projected light when it hits the screen.

At "How Black Can It Get?" you will see two masks rotating in the darkness. If you take a flash picture of them, you will see no details on one of the masks — so are they different? That mask is covered in the world's blackest paint: "super-black" paint that is made up of carbon nanotubes

## 'Color in a New Light' exhibit at the Fleet Science Center

that absorb 99.9% of the light that strikes the surface. This eliminates the shadows and reflections that help us see the three-dimensional structure.

IR cameras let us "see" temperature by converting the heat of infrared light into visible colors. At a recent IMAX film preview of "Deep Sky" at the Fleet, we learned that as the new James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) peers into the atmospheric dust and gas in deep space, its sensitive scientific instruments gather infrared light. Scientists interpret this data that reveals spectacular images of stars, galaxies and more, dating as far back as "the beginning of time and space" — many more images than were possible for us to see with the Hubble and other telescopes that preceded it.

UV light radiates at shorter wavelengths than visible light and, like IR light, it cannot be seen by the human eye. However, when UV light is absorbed by certain materials, its energy is re-emitted as longer wavelength visible radiation (visible light). At "Pen Writer," a swinging pendulum with a light source dangles above a spinning platform made of a phosphorescent material. The platform stores the energy from the light source and emits it slowly over time, producing patterns that we can see.

Instead of turning a hand-held kaleidoscope to see how colorful reflections are altered by its angled mirrors, at "Kaleidoscope" you actually climb inside a large kaleidoscope to observe scattered reflections of yourself.

At "Color Printing," see how four-color printers add or subtract cyan, magenta, yellow and black to produce images in a broad spectrum of colors.

At "Color in Motion," spin the disks faster and faster to see how the colors and patterns change, and trick the color receptors in your eyes into "seeing" colors that are not even there.

At "What Does It Mean to be Colorblind?" we learn that about one out of every 12 men and one in 200 women are colorblind, which causes them to see colors differently. The most common type makes it hard to tell red and green apart.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Fleet Science Center is one of 17 world-class museums in Balboa Park — nestled amid lush gardens and fountains, and adjacent to the world-famous San Diego Zoo. The Fleet "is dedicated to connecting San Diego to the power of science," hosting an ever-changing variety of fascinating and educational scientific exhibits throughout the year. In addition to special exhibits, the Fleet has a newly renovated, state-of-the-art IMAX theater with all-new seats; an interactive, family-friendly science lab called "Studio X" where you can make projects to take home; a well-stocked store that includes a multitude of science-related kits, and much more. For more information, visit: <https://www.fleetscience.org/>.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse.

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2604 B-280 El Camino Real, Carlsbad, CA 92008  
619-280-2985 • E-mail: editor@navydispatch.com  
Editor.....Scott Sutherland

The Dispatch is published online weekly on Thursdays, and in print on the 1st & 16th of each month by Western States Weeklies, Inc., as a commercial, free-enterprise newspaper. The editorial objective of the Dispatch is to promote support for a strong military presence. Contents of the Armed Forces Dispatch are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or U.S. Marine Corps. The opinions and views of writers whose materials appear herein are those of the writers and not the publishers. Appearance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or any other DOD component, this newspaper, or Western States Weeklies, Inc. Subscription cost is \$75/year.

## MOVIES AT THE BASES

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**Thursday, November 9**  
6pm The Exorcist: Believer r  
8:20pm Saw X r  
**Friday, November 10**  
6pm The Exorcist: Believer r  
8:20pm Saw X r  
**Saturday, November 11**  
3:40pm Expend4bles r  
6pm The Exorcist: Believer r  
**Sunday, November 12**  
1pm PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie pg  
3pm Saw X r

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**Friday, November 10**  
6pm The Exorcist: Believer r  
**Saturday, November 11**  
1pm Expend4bles r  
3pm The Creator pg13  
6pm The Exorcist: Believer r  
**Sunday, November 12**  
1pm PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie pg  
3pm Dumb Money r  
Updates: navylifefsw.com

**Pendleton Theater and Training Center**  
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**Saturday, November 11**  
CLOSED FOR VETERAN'S DAY  
**Saturday, November 18**  
1:30pm PAW Patrol: Mighty Movie (PG)  
4pm Saw X (R)  
**Saturday, November 25**  
1:30pm Killers of the Flower Moon (R)

**Bob Hope Theater** 577-4143  
MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242

**Friday, November 10**  
Theater Closed – Veterans Day Observance  
**Saturday, November 11**  
3pm Paw Patrol: Mighty Movie (PG)  
6:30pm The Exorcist: Believer (R)  
**Sunday, November 12**  
12pm The Creator (PG-13)  
3pm Expend4bles (R)

## SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

### When should I retire and claim my Social Security benefits?

*Dear Rusty: I am 64 years old and having difficulty working due to my arthritis, but I can continue part time as a podiatrist. I do not know the best way to determine when to retire. What is the formula or a way to determine which is a better choice? Signed: Undecided*

**Dear Undecided:** There is a difference between deciding when to retire from working and deciding when to claim your Social Security benefits. For the former, you should consult with a certified financial advisor, but I'll provide you with how Social Security fits into your personal circumstances. In deciding when to claim Social Security, you should look at your financial needs, your life expectancy, your work status, and your marital status. There is no one formula right for everyone because everyone's circumstances are different, but here are some things to help decide what is right for you:

- Social Security has an "earnings test" which applies to anyone who collects Social Security before reaching their full retirement age (FRA). Your FRA is 66 years and 8 months, and that is the point at which you get 100% of the SS benefit earned from a lifetime of working. If you collect SS before your FRA and continue to work, there is a limit to how much you can earn without jeopardizing your benefits. For example, the earnings limit for 2023 is \$21,240 and, if that is exceeded, SS will take away benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. They "take away" benefits by withholding future payments until they recover the penalty for exceeding the limit. If your earnings are substantially over the limit, you will be ineligible to collect Social Security until either your earnings are less, or you reach your FRA.

- If you claim SS before your FRA your benefit amount will be permanently reduced. If, for example, you claim SS to start at age 65 your monthly benefit will be about 89% of what it would be at your FRA. That reduced benefit would not change thereafter except for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) usually granted annually.

- If Social Security will be a major part of your retirement income, then waiting to get a higher monthly benefit may be a prudent strategy for you. The longer you wait to claim the more your benefit will be. Your SS benefit will continue to grow until you are 70 years old, and at 70 your monthly benefit will be about 27% more than it would be at your FRA. Your maximum SS benefit will be attained at age 70 but waiting until age 70 to claim is only prudent if you anticipate a long life expectancy.

- Life expectancy is a very important factor in deciding when to claim SS. If you claim at age 70 instead of at your FRA, you will need to live until you are about 83 to breakeven moneywise. If you live even longer than that, then waiting until 70 will yield the highest monthly amount and the most in cumulative lifetime benefits. But if your anticipated life expectancy is less, claiming earlier may be a better choice.

- If you are married and expect your wife to survive you, consider that the benefit your wife can get as your widow will be based on your SS benefit when you die, thus the longer you wait to claim the more your wife's benefit as your widow may be. If you predecease your wife, her benefit will be based on the amount you were receiving at your death if that is more than her personally earned SS benefit.

So, as you can see, deciding when to claim Social Security is a decision to be made after carefully evaluating your personal circumstances as described above.

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## Sore, scratchy throat? Soothing pain from illness or allergy

It's a familiar sensation as the days grow shorter and colder: a scratchy, painful feeling when you swallow, talk, or even just breathe. Sometimes, a sore throat is little more than a nuisance. But it can also be a sign of serious infection. So how do you know which is which? And what can you do to soothe a sore throat?

Many things can trigger a sore throat, explains Dr. Alison Han, an infectious disease expert at the NIH Clinical Center. "It can be an allergen. It can be an infection, like a virus or bacteria. Sometimes, it's even just dry air," she says.

So, when should you call your health care provider? That depends on how bad the sore throat is and what symptoms come with it, Han explains. "If it's a mild sore throat and a runny nose, some congestion, that's probably a typical cold," she says. But severe pain plus symptoms like a high fever and a loss of interest in eating or drinking may be serious.

How long a sore throat lasts also matters. "If it's been more

than three days, then you might want to seek medical advice," Han says. "But at any time, it's always reasonable to call your doctor and get an opinion."

A very contagious bacterial infection called strep can cause a sore throat, high fever, and swollen glands. Children may also have nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain. Strep can cause other serious health problems. So it's important to see a doctor as soon as possible if you think someone in your household has strep.

If test results confirm strep, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics. Even if you feel better after a few days, it's important to finish the entire prescription. Most causes of a sore throat, though, don't need antibiotics. These include allergies as well as colds, flu, COVID-19, and RSV, which are all caused by viruses. Antibiotics only work against bacteria. Doctors can sometimes prescribe antiviral medication for certain viruses, like flu or COVID-19.

There is no treatment for the common cold, but over-the-

counter products for symptom relief may help. For example, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or aspirin (not for kids) can reduce pain. Mild allergies can be treated using over-the-counter antihistamines, decongestants, or nasal sprays. But you may need prescription medication or allergy shots for severe allergies.

A sore throat is a common symptom for the current variants of COVID-19. "If you have a sore throat and some other cold-like symptoms, it's reasonable to do a COVID-19 test," Han says. This can help you stop spreading the disease to others.

For most causes of a sore throat, time is the best healer. Lozenges, lollipops, or other hard candies can help soothe your throat. Experts now recommend that children under the age of 4 don't use any over-the-counter cold and cough medications.

For young kids who might choke on candy, cold liquids or popsicles can help numb the pain. See the Wise Choices box

for other tips.

The best way to prevent a sore throat is to avoid the germs that cause them. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often. Steer clear of other people who are sick. And stay up to date with the vaccines recommended for your age group, including flu, COVID-19, and RSV. "These shots can help protect ourselves and our loved ones," Han says.

### Wise Choices: Soothing a sore throat

- Warm liquids can help. Try hot tea with lemon or gargling with warm salt water.
- Keep your throat moist with lozenges or hard candies. Do not give these to young kids.
- Ice chips or popsicles may help numb the pain.
- Painkillers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can reduce throat pain. Read the label to make sure products are safe for children. Never give aspirin to kids.
- Keep the air in your bedroom moist with a clean humidifier or vaporizer.
- Avoid smoking or inhaling second-hand smoke. Smoke can irritate the throat.

## NIH researchers develop approach that could help supercharge T-cell therapies against solid tumors

Early research in animal models shows potential against cervical cancer and neuroblastoma. Researchers at the National Institutes of Health have developed a way to potentially increase the effectiveness of T cell-based immunotherapy treatments, such as CAR T-cell therapy, against solid tumors. T cells are specialized white blood cells of the immune system that eliminate infected or abnormal cells. In animal studies, the enhanced T-cell therapies were effective against cervical cancer and neuroblastoma, a common solid tumor in children. The findings, by scientists at the National Cancer Institute (NCI),

part of NIH, appear Nov. 1, 2023, in Clinical Cancer Research. CAR T-cell therapy is a form of cellular immunotherapy that involves engineering T cells in the laboratory so they can specifically target and kill tumors. CAR T-cell therapy has been successful in treating blood cancers, but it hasn't worked well for solid tumors. To improve the effectiveness of T-cell therapy against solid tumors, researchers at NCI's Center for Cancer Research engineered T cells (CAR T cells and another form of cellular immunotherapy called

TCR T cells) to carry cytokines, which are proteins that can boost T-cell function. In laboratory studies, CAR and TCR T cells modified to express the cytokines IL-15 and IL-21 on their surface killed far more cancer cells than T cells carrying just one of these cytokines or neither of them. Previous research has found that treating patients with large amounts of cytokines caused severe, potentially fatal, side effects. The new approach aims to deliver this cytokine boost in a much more targeted way.

## Treating hearing loss to help brain health

More than 6 million people in the U.S. are living with dementia. The condition causes loss of thinking abilities, memory, and other cognitive skills. Safe and affordable ways to prevent or slow the age-related loss of brain health are greatly needed.

Past studies have linked hearing loss to the development of dementia. So, treating hearing loss may be a way to slow or

prevent brain problems. A new study tested whether hearing aids could help.

Researchers recruited nearly 1,000 older adults with substantial hearing loss. Half of them were given hearing aids. The other half received an education program about healthy aging. The researchers then measured cognitive decline over the next three years.

Participants who received hearing aids found that their ability to communicate improved. Those in the other group saw no improvement. Overall, both groups had similar rates of cognitive decline. However, people at increased risk of developing dementia, such as those with diabetes or high blood pressure, benefited most from the hearing aids. Among these, the people with hearing aids had

about half the rate of cognitive decline as those who had similar risks but didn't get hearing aids.

"Hearing loss is very treatable in later life," says Dr. Frank Lin from Johns Hopkins University. "We recommend for general health and well-being that older adults have their hearing checked regularly and any hearing issues properly addressed."

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