

# PREVENTION IN ACTION

## LEADERSHIP

### PENDLETON CLUB LEADS THE WAY IN SHARING BEAUTY OF SURFING WITH MARINES

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**CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.** – A line of vehicle headlights cut through the morning fog along Camp Pendleton’s Del Mar beach.

Veteran surfers confidently tread the sandy path toward the ocean while newcomers gulped at the sight of waves crashing.

The Pendleton Surf Club leads an effort to “spread the positive force of surfing to the military members that make the sacrifices on a daily basis for our country’s freedoms.”

A pop-up tent marked the site where the active-duty Marines of all ranks, family members, and club leaders would meet for surf tutorials, gear fitting, and refreshments before heading out to the waves.

The club is unique in that it caters specifically to active-duty Marines, but it also welcomes families of active duty Marines, reservists, retirees, and civilian and uniformed personnel from all branches stationed aboard Camp Pendleton.

Ocean aficionados have long touted the positive effects of surfing, and health experts are increasingly discussing the specific benefits for members of the military and veteran community.

“There is something special about surfing,” said Carlos Burela, a Marine veteran, the club’s vice president, and a specialist with the Embedded Preventive Behavioral Health Capability in the 1st Marine Division. “Surfing heals the mind, it reduces stress, lifts our self-esteem, and makes us happier human beings . . . the club is a



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PENDLETON SURF CLUB

A member of the Pendleton Surf Club attacks some waves in the Pacific Ocean.



Maj Matthew Halligan, Cpl Tyler Spencer, Cpl Mari Burgos, and a friend also enjoy the club, which caters to Service members and families, veterans, and civilians.

great place to mentor new Marines and introduce them to the sport.”

The club’s officers and senior members are quick to teach newcomers about the mental and physical health benefits offered through surfing, although the club stands for more than the sport of

surfing.

Much like the core values in the Marine Corps, the club’s goals of honor, respect, dedication, and fidelity underscore the commitment to service to the community and to one another.

The club meets on a monthly

basis and is proud to host a growing audience as new generations of Marines come out to give the club a try, often with no prior experience.

The club provides “an opportunity to get away and interact with different individuals, civilian and military,” said Cpl Mari Burgos, a Marine with Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division, on her first experience at a club event. “Everyone had a smile so big the recruits could probably see [us] from the top of the Reaper.”

With all the stressors in work and home life, the Pendleton Surf Club provides a respite where Marines learn valuable skills for a lifelong hobby, while in the company of a welcoming second family.

Through the leadership of the club’s officials—and the support of new members—the Pendleton Surf club will continue to make waves in the Camp Pendleton community.

**LEADERS SHOULD STRENGTHEN MARINES TO HELP PREVENT STRESS INJURIES**

*“I love the Corps for those intangible possessions that cannot be issued: pride, honor, integrity, and being able to carry on the traditions for generations of warriors past.”*

**—Cpl. Jeff Sornig, USMC,  
in Navy Times, November 1994**

*Leader: the person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country*

**—Oxford Dictionary**

Although seemingly a simple definition, Marines know there’s more to being a leader than can be captured in a few words.

The spirit of Marine Corps leadership is honor, courage, and commitment. It’s taking the hard right over the easy wrong. It’s ensuring the well-being of the Marines to our left and right.

Ensuring the well-being of Marines and Sailors includes not only strengthening them, but keeping them strong, monitoring their condition, applying stress first aid when needed, and returning them to full fitness as soon as possible.

Caring for their psychological health is crucial, and the [Combat and Operational Stress Control \(COSC\) Doctrine](#) (MCTP 3-30E) gives us a blueprint that is grounded in lessons learned from leaders before us and in science and evidence. Leaders should use the COSC Doctrine as a tool for teach-



ing and for professional discussion about combat and operational stress control. While we hone technical and physical skills to make us successful in combat and other operations, we cannot neglect the mind and spirit.

One of the foundational tools of the COSC Doctrine is known as SMITR (pronounced smi-tər), an acronym for the Five Core Leader Functions: strengthen, mitigate, identify, treat, and reintegrate. Although all leader functions are important, strengthen is truly a protective factor to guard against stress.

Centuries of experience in military organizations and decades of research have demonstrated that commanders of military units can do a lot to

enhance the resilience of unit members and their families. Activities available to commanders to strengthen their troops fall into three categories—training, social cohesion, and leadership.

Tough, realistic training develops physical and mental strength and endurance, enhances warfighters’ confidence in their abilities to cope with the challenges they will face, and inoculates them to the stressors they will encounter.

Social cohesion, defined broadly as mutual trust and support in a group, is developed through shared experiences of accomplishment and overcoming adversity. Yes, train hard . . . but don’t forget to make time for fun! Go bowling, host a unit picnic, give Marines and their families a chance to have fun together, know one another, and build trust.

Leaders also can enhance the resilience of their unit members by being a resource of courage and fortitude. In other words, take care of yourself. If you need help, seek help. Share your lessons learned and talk about your life in an effort to reduce stigma and encourage help seeking.

For more information about COSC, reach out to your regional training coordinator, COSC rep, or a Marine in your unit who has had Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) training.

**PRACTICE SELF-CARE**

Practice Self-care focuses on self-care techniques that Service members, civilians, veterans, and families find helpful. Stress is a part of everyday life, and all of us can benefit from learning techniques to manage it. This month, two leaders at Headquarters Marine Corps share how they practice self-care.

**Maj John Gutierrez, Deputy Branch Head,  
Personal and Professional Readiness Branch,  
Marine & Family Programs Division**

**What:** When I am off duty, I volunteer and go on hikes.

**How it Helps:** Volunteering for a cause or organization that’s important to everyone is a powerful way to contribute and makes me feel good. Hiking is a great way to get in some movement and unwind in nature after a busy day.

**Jacqueline Cajina, School Liaison Program Manager,  
Family Care Branch, Marine & Family Programs Division**

**What:** Asking for help from someone I trust, coloring, listening to music.

**How it Helps:** Asking for help from someone I trust reminds me that I have people in my life who support me when I need it. Coloring and listening to music helps take my mind off of things that could trigger emotions I cannot control.

**ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER**

The United States Marine Corps’ Marine & Family Programs Division publishes Prevention in Action.

**The contents are for informational purposes only.** The content is not intended to be a substitute for

professional financial advice, medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Email [hqmcprevention@usmc.mil](mailto:hqmcprevention@usmc.mil) to suggest topics or ask questions. December’s topic will be total

fitness.

*To access hot links in newsletter: right click on link, copy link location, and paste link into a new browser window.*

**HITT COACHES SHARE LEADERSHIP WISDOM**

Marines often hear the familiar mantra of “teach, coach, and mentor.” In fact, in 2016, then-Commandant General Neller used those very words in a message to the Corps.

“Engaged leadership is what sets Marines apart . . . this [message] provides a reminder to all leaders of the responsibility they have to teach, coach, and mentor the junior Marines in their charge.”

Semper Fit is here to help Marines boost their coaching skills with the help of our expert coaches.

Here are some things that Semper Fit’s professional strength and conditioning High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) coaches had to say about what they have learned about leadership and coaching.

“Coaching is simple. Empower your people to achieve what they believe they can’t. Anything is

possible with enough belief.”

—Coach Nick Gounaris,  
Headquarters Marine Corps  
(HQMC) Combat Fitness Specialist

“Coaching is about building people up and finding positive ways to challenge them to continue to improve throughout life.”

—Coach Lynda Rummel,  
HQMC Combat Fitness Specialist

“For me, coaching is about four things: Connect with every Athlete. Afford them effective training sessions. Protect your athletes. Simplify complex movement patterns.”

—Coach Ray Anderson, MCCS  
Lejeune-New River

“Coaching is an investment in your athletes. Success will almost always come down to the amount of time and effort invested with them.”

—Coach Del Yackle, MCCS Yuma



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“Coaches manage stress, both planned and unplanned, and find a way to dose the appropriate amount to ensure progress. If someone has the will, I will help them find the way.”

—Coach Allen Sese,  
MCCS Hampton Roads

“People assume coaching is only about what happens in the weight

room, but I argue that emotional and mental wellbeing is just as important as physical wellbeing. As a coach I always strive to improve all of an athlete, not just one piece of them.”

—Coach Kelsie Meade,  
MCCS Quantico

Motivated yet? Connect with your local Semper Fit [HITT](#) coaches.

**BECOME A SINGLE MARINE PROGRAM LEADER**

Serving as a leader in the [Single Marine Program](#) (SMP) parallels what it means to be a leader in the Corps: taking care of Marines.

This does not mean taking action only when a Marine asks for help, or has made a mistake—it is stepping up from the very beginning to prevent problematic behaviors that could end their careers or ruin their young lives.

SMP was founded to improve the quality of life for single Marines in the barracks. The majority of the Corps falls into this population.

With the holidays approaching, for many Americans this is a time to celebrate. For Marines, it can equate to being separated from their families and friends. They may be deployed or lack the financial means or accrued annual leave to travel home.

That leads to Thanksgiving and Christmas

being spent in their barracks rooms. It leaves many Marines feeling lonely and isolated. SMP leaders have a direct line of sight as to how this diminishes readiness.

How can serving as a SMP leader mitigate negative feelings and actions among troops?

You will be leading by example.

That simply means getting your Marines out of the barracks and helping them discover what interests them.

Encourage noncommissioned officers and junior Marines to participate in games, sports, recreational activities, volunteer opportunities, and trips. Getting outdoors, meeting new



people, or giving back to your community rejuvenates the soul.

When your troops see your personal involvement and success inside and outside the Corps, they will want to mimic it.

If you have detected a quality of life issue that has not been resolved, make your SMP aware and take steps to address the issue.

The easy thing to do and the right thing to do are seldom the same; being a leader is having the moral courage and intestinal fortitude to speak up when something is wrong.

This also means caring for the whole Marine: from their living conditions, to their work environments, to the company they keep and what they pursue “outside the gate.”

As a leader in the SMP, you serve as a brick in the foundation of young Marines’ character.

## CIRRAS GIVES COMMANDERS NEW TOOL TO AID FORCE PRESERVATION EFFORTS

BY COL KEVIN DIGMAN  
CHIEF OF BEHAVIORAL PROGRAMS

Marine Corps leaders make every effort to preserve and protect Marines and Sailors by providing persistent and engaged leadership.

Leaders can achieve the highest level of force preservation and readiness through risk identification and management.

Force Preservation Councils (FPC) are guided by the Marine Corps leadership principle “know your Marines and look out for their welfare.”

FPCs aim to increase unit readiness by optimizing the potential of every Marine and Sailor through risk assessment and mitigation. This can be difficult if leaders do not have all of the information necessary to assess the level of risk and implement mitigation plans in support of their Marines and Sailors.

Commanders and Senior Enlisted Advisors (SEA) have lacked access to integrated, real-time, objective, and holistic assessments of their Marines’ and Sailors’ overall readiness from a single source. The lack of this vital,

integrated information—to include medical, mental health, and command input—can result in adverse or negative outcomes, including loss of life. In September 2020, the Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) was deployed to support commanders’ execution of the FPC and other Force Preservation efforts.

CIRRAS provides a single, standardized, software-based tool that enables proactive identification and assessment of individual risk and resiliency factors. It also provides the automatic transfer of the same data between commands.

CIRRAS also aids real-time risk mitigation and management by allowing commanders and leaders to review Marine and Sailor force preservation information at any time, not just during FPC meetings.

The system provides current and concise information on risk factors and highlights areas of concern. With the support of CIRRAS, commanders are better equipped to mitigate



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risk by selecting mitigation strategies specific to the individual’s level of need.

CIRRAS does not change or alter the force preservation or FPC process for commanders. The system simply provides a secure, integrated profile for each Marine and Sailor with the most current information to enable real-time risk management and mitigation.

For more information, please refer to MARADMIN 464/20, Announcement and Implementation of the CIRRAS.

For questions about CIRRAS, please email [cirras.support@usmc.mil](mailto:cirras.support@usmc.mil).

## SAPR CONNECT ATTRACTS LEADERS OF PREVENTION EFFORTS

Across the Department of Defense (DoD), those working to prevent sexual assault are joining SAPR Connect, the only DoD-wide virtual sexual assault prevention community of practice. SAPR Connect now has more than 5,000 members from the Services, National Guard, Coast Guard, and many DoD offices with equities in violence prevention. Since the DoD Prevention Plan of Action’s April 2019 release, membership has climbed nearly 30 percent.

“We are excited to see this membership surge for several reasons,” said Dr. Suzanne Holroyd, Senior Prevention Program Manager, DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO). “This growing SAPR Connect membership tells us that the DoD community increasingly sees the value of connecting with others working this critical topic. Effective prevention efforts will expand more quickly across DoD if we have a strong, unified prevention community all using and sharing research-based solutions.”

One reason DoD SAPRO created SAPR Connect in 2014 was to foster this sharing of resources and ideas. Research-based resources are being developed across DoD as well as by civilian organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

SAPR Connect features several CDC products, such as “STOP SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence” which offers easy-to-understand research-based strategies to address prevention challenges. Also, since the sharing of program updates and tools can strengthen a community, SAPR Connect has a growing collection of newsletters prepared by the Services and SAPRO, all with insights designed to improve prevention efforts. SAPR



Connect members can also post or respond to a question in the Prevention Chat Forum, or upload a resource or product to share.

SAPR Connect members can also access a wide-range of educational resources.

“For our efforts to have the desired impact, we need to ensure our prevention personnel have the required knowledge and skills,” said Dr. Katie Ports, Senior Research Psychologist, DoD SAPRO. “To that end, we regularly host webinars with internal and external prevention experts who help participants understand and apply what they learned to support and implement prevention activities within our DoD community.”

The webinars are recorded and posted on SAPR Connect for later access by members.

Individuals within the DoD community (with a common access card) can join SAPR Connect by visiting [www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil) and following the instructions on the Prevention tab.