



SEMPER FI SOUND OFF

The newsletter of the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group

SPRING 2025



President's Message

Each time you choose to support DPSG, you remind us why we do what we do. In a world full of worthy causes, you continue to stand beside our Marines, Navy Corpsmen, and their families—and that loyalty humbles and inspires us.

As Kobi Yamada said, "There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer." At DPSG, that spirit beats strong. Our all-volunteer team—no salaries, just heart—shows up rain or shine, whether it's hosting a baby shower, serving Thanksgiving dinner on base, or raising funds in the community. You'll find them everywhere, those unmistakable RED SHIRTS, not just saying they care—but proving it.

On April 12th, we gathered at Doheny State Park to honor this extraordinary spirit during our Volunteer Appreciation BBQ. A special salute goes to our Volunteer Director, Sheri Schneringer, who leads with purpose and passion, inspiring the quiet heroes behind the scenes—the ones whose names may never make the headlines, but whose impact is undeniable.

And the numbers? They speak for themselves:

- 407 volunteers on our list

- 100+ volunteers active each year
- 27 events supported in 2024
- 6,521 hours from our Board of Directors
- 3,895 total volunteer hours at and preparing for events
- 10,416 hours of service in 2024 alone

Is it any wonder why military leaders call us "The Gold Standard"? Because of our volunteers—because of YOU—we don't just support our Marines, we uplift them, we honor them, and we serve them with love.



In closing, with profound appreciation, we thank all our patriotic friends across the country. Your belief in our mission and your unwavering dedication changes lives. Together, we are a force like no other.

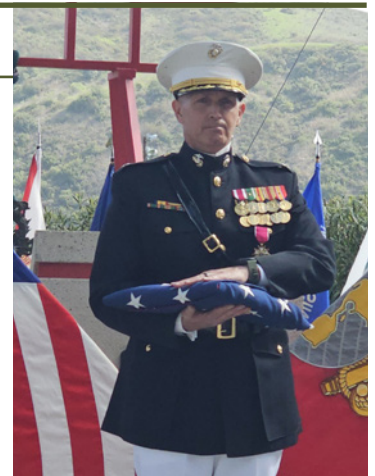
Semper Fi, Terry Rifkin, President

Retirement for Colonel AJ Munro

For 31 years, Col. AJ Munro stood the watch, ensuring that we, our families, and our fellow countrymen could sleep soundly in safety each and every night.

DPSG extends our deepest gratitude and heartfelt congratulations to Col. Munro as he retires from an extraordinary career in the United States Marine Corps. On March 28th, in the serene setting of the 5th Marine Memorial Garden, Col. Munro officially "gave up the watch," marking the end of an era of steadfast leadership and unwavering service.

Throughout his career, Col. Munro's dedication to the brave men and women of the Marine Corps has left an indelible mark, particularly during his three tenures as Bravo Command for the 5th Marines, where he played a pivotal role in the Regiment's deployment to Australia with the Special Purpose MAGTF. His leadership, integrity, and commitment to service have been a source of



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Honoring the Heart Behind the Brave

Be part of something truly meaningful—a tribute that stands as a lasting testament to the courage of our service members and the unwavering strength of their families.

After years of planning and collaboration with the City of Dana Point, on April 15th the City Council agreed unanimously to formalize a partnership with DPSG and to support the park improvements needed for the project. We are honored to officially introduce **Returning Home**—a breathtaking bronze sculpture by renowned artist Sutton Betti. This powerful monument will be the focal point of a revitalized Heritage Park, standing with a striking granite backdrop as a symbol of resilience, unity, and love.

A Tribute to Service & Sacrifice

This monument pays homage to the brave men and women of the United States Marine Corps and by extension, *all* branches of the Armed Forces. It also honors the often-unsung heroes—the families who support them. Their sacrifices, steadfast love, and enduring strength deserve to be recognized and remembered.

Join Us in Creating a Legacy

Your support will help ensure that **Returning Home** stands as a timeless reminder of service, sacrifice, and commitment. Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a difference.

This is your chance to:

- ✔ Honor a veteran
- ✔ Show gratitude for a friend
- ✔ Remember a loved one
- ✔ Promote your business while supporting a legacy of service

Exclusive Sponsorship Opportunities

For donations of \$500 and above, we offer tiered sponsorship opportunities, including:

- ✔ Inscribed pavers
- ✔ Bronze plaques on our Wall of Honor
- ✔ Patriotic benches

Our team will assist you in designing your tribute, ensuring your generosity is recognized at the monument site and beyond. Sponsors will also be acknowledged on our **website, social media, printed publications, and at community events.**

Take Action Today!

Visit danapoint5thmarines.com/returning-home/ for more details or call **949-412-3475**. Together, we can accomplish something truly extraordinary. Please help the “Heart behind the brave” to beat more loudly!



To Each Other, To Our Country & To The Battles Ahead

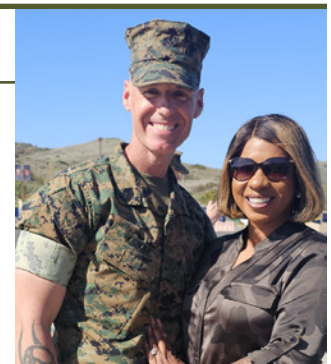
Latin for “Always Faithful,” Semper Fidelis is more than a motto—it is a way of life for every Marine. It represents an unwavering commitment to our mission, our Nation, and the Marines who stand beside us.

On Friday, March 21st, Sergeant Major Garrett G. Kirkby bid farewell to the 5th Marine Regiment after two and a half years of dedicated service to the Fighting Fifth. His tenure included a deployment to Australia in March 2024, where he served as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader for Marine Rotational Force-Darwin, Marine Air-Ground Task Force.

Throughout his time with the Regiment, SgtMaj Kirkby profoundly impacted the lives of countless Marines, fostering growth, strengthening mission readiness, and exemplifying steadfast leadership. His unwavering support was instrumental in helping DPSG achieve significant milestones in service to both warriors and their families.

SgtMaj Kirkby now moves on to serve as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the 4th Marine Division in New Orleans. As he embarks on this next chapter, we extend our deepest gratitude for his leadership, mentorship, and dedication. We also recognize and honor his wife, SgtMaj Ronda Kirkby, as she approaches her well-earned retirement. Together, they have been more than leaders—they have been family.

You make us proud SgtMaj Kirkby. **Semper 5th!**





From the Command Post

Friends and family, greetings from San Mateo and Grizzly Nation! The Fighting Fifth has been busy, and I couldn't be prouder of our Marines and Sailors or more grateful for the support of the Dana Point Support Group.

We kicked off the quarter with a memorable Marine Corps Ball aboard the Queen Mary, celebrating the 249th birthday of our Corps—thank you to all who made it possible. The Annual Holiday Party at Dave & Buster's, hosted by DPSG, was another highlight, bringing joy to our Marines, Sailors, and families.

The new year brought some new faces to the Regiment. We had changes of command for three of our four infantry battalions, including the assumption of command of 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, by Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Nicholson, son of former 5th Marines Commanding Officer Lieutenant General Larry Nicholson. Our battalions continue to train in preparation for various deployments over the coming months and years. This month, we will welcome home 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, as they redeploy from Okinawa, where they served as the Battalion Landing Team for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The Regimental Staff has been busy supporting our subordinate battalions while honing our command-and-control skills through exercises like Steel Knight, where we helped certify 1st Marine Regiment before their deployment to Australia, and Freedom Shield, in which we supported the Division staff deployed to the Republic of Korea. This training is essential as we prepare to deploy the Regiment to Australia next year.

Unfortunately, we also had to bid farewell to some of our family members. Sergeant Major Kirkby completed his service with the Regiment and was selected to be the Sergeant Major of the 4th Marine Division in New Orleans. We wish him and Ronda the best of luck in this next adventure. We also wished fair winds and

following seas to Colonel A.J. Munro as he retired after more than 30 years of honorable service. His positive impact on the Regiment will be felt for years to come.

Next month, I will have the honor of leading a group of Marines from the Regiment to France to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who fought in the Battle of Belleau Wood in World War I, after which the Regiment was awarded the French Fourragere. This will be one of my last acts in command as I prepare to turn the Regiment over to Colonel George Flynn on July 3. Colonel Flynn is currently the Operations Officer for the 1st Marine Division, and I am confident the Regiment will be in good hands. I know you will welcome him and his family as warmly as you did Michaela, the boys, and me.

Work continues around Camp San Mateo/62 Area. We are currently executing Operation CLEAN SWEEP, in which the base has surged resources for Marines to conduct self-improvement and repairs to their barracks rooms, with support from Sailors of the famed Seabees. In conjunction with this, the incredible work around the camp—made possible by the efforts and support of DPSG—was recognized as noteworthy by the Commanding Generals of the 1st Marine Division and I Marine Expeditionary Force. In other exciting news, the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new chow hall is scheduled for the week of June 23.

I continue to be humbled by the opportunity to command this Regiment and am awestruck by the support you provide to our Marines, Sailors, and their families..

Semper Fidelis, Grizzly 6



Colonel Munro, *continued from page 1*

inspiration to all who have had the privilege of serving alongside him.

Col. Munro and his wife, Rosie—his steadfast partner and rock—now step into their next chapter, supported by their two sons. Jack, is currently attending the University of San Diego, while Ian, following in his father's footsteps, has proudly joined the United States Marine Corps.

As they embark on this new journey, we wish the Munros fair winds and following seas, knowing they will always have a home with the Fighting Fifth.





Save the Date

TO BENEFIT OUR
**FIGHTING
FIFTH MARINES
AND
WOUNDED
WARRIORS**

**COMBAT
GOLF
TOURNAMENT**

**June 9th
2025**

**ARROYO TRABUCO
GOLF COURSE**

Join us for the most fun you'll have all year on the links! This year the Combat Golf ball drop will feature more prizes than ever. For just \$10 a ball you can have a chance to win **\$2,000, \$500, and \$250**. Just **\$290** includes golf, lunch, dinner, and prizes. Best part? You're not just playing for cash...

You're supporting the legendary 5th Marine Regiment and their families — our beloved Fighting Fifth.

For complete information about Combat Golf, how to register to play, sponsor a Marine, business sponsor opportunities or buy golf ball drop tickets, visit danapoint5thmarines.com/combat-golf-2025/

SAVE THE DATE

Laughs for Leathernecks

October 6, 2025 | Irvine Improv

As a proud citizen and patriot, you can serve with honor!

Join our mission by volunteering or donating to support our Fighting Fifth and their families.

THANK YOU! SEMPER FIDELIS – ALWAYS FAITHFUL

Board of Directors

Executive Board

- Terry Rifkin, *President*
- Christian Asis, *Vice President*
- Patti Short, *Treasurer*
- Cathy Nelson, *Secretary*

Directors

- Jan Bennett
- Dean Koukos
- Judy Mastracchio
- Sheri Schneringer
- Mark Schuler
- Jill Watson



COMPANIES FOR THE COURAGEOUS

Supported our Wounded, Families of the Fallen, Marines, Spouses, and Children

Commander and Chief Level \$25,000

Stanley W. Ekstrom Foundation

General Level \$5,000

- Cityside Fiber
- Dana Point Harbor Partners
- Monarch Beach Sunrise Rotary Club
- Foothill Transportation Agencies
- Brittan Family Foundation

Presidential Level \$10,000

- The Beverly & Frank Arnstein Foundation
- Crisp Imaging
- Norm & Lory Kaufman

Colonel Level \$2,500

- Monster Energy Company
- Sons of the American Legion
- Evelyn and Fred McGregor
- Zumalink, Inc.



Donations of any size are gratefully accepted!