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Marine Corps families around the nation to gather for combat deployment support conference

St. Louis, MO – April 6, 2007 - United States Marine Corps family members from around the country will gather in St. Louis at the MarineParents.com conference to learn about the Marine Corps, combat deployment, recovery from combat, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and ways to encourage awareness for Troop Support in their own communities. Attendance will range from new Marine families, families experiencing first, second or third combat deployments, and families who have experienced casualties of combat.

MarineParents.com, Inc. will be hosting the 2nd Annual National Conference for Marine Corps family and friends at the Adam's Mark Hotel, April 20 - 22, 2007 from noon Friday through noon Sunday. A benefit dinner will be held on Saturday, April 21, 2007, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and will include a silent auction.

"Giving families an opportunity to connect with one another and understand they are not alone in the emotions of having a loved one deployed to a combat zone, is important for mental and emotional health. Education about the Marine Corps and combat deployment is crucial," said Tracy Della Vecchia, director of the national organization. The conference will give families an opportunity to learn about combat deployment and recovery, and meet one another to share stories and emotions.

The Keynote speaker Saturday evening will be Lt. General George R. Christmas, United States Marine Corps, Retired, and current President of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation. First Lieutenant Matthew H. Hilton, from the Department of Defense "Why We Serve" program, and recently returned from Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, will also be speaking Saturday evening.

Speakers Friday evening include national speaker Dr. Mike Colson, a former Navy Commander and Chaplain who is now the outreach coordinator with the Seattle Veteran's Center assisting returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and Colonel Jack Jackson, a retired Marine Corps combat pilot, with over 600 combat missions during the Viet Nam conflict.

Saturday morning, Colonel Bryan P. McCoy will present "Preparing for Combat", highlighting the training Marines receive prior to being deployed to combat zones. Colonel McCoy, an active duty Marine, commanded the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines during Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003 and 2004. His battalion was in Firdo's Square on April 9, 2003 when the Saddam statue was pulled down.

Dr. Bridget C. Cantrell, author of the acclaimed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder book, *Downrange to Iraq and Back*, will present on the "Returning from Combat Deployment" discussion panel Saturday afternoon.

Andrew Carroll, editor of several books including *War Letters*, a New York Times bestseller, will participate in the Authors' Hall, on Saturday, April 21, 2007 from 2:00 p.m. through 4:30 p.m. Mr. Carroll's most recent book, *Grace Under Fire: Letters of Faith in Times of War*, will be available for sale. The Author's Hall is open to the public.

Additional authors include Dr. Bridgett Cantrell, *Downrange to Iraq and Back* and *Warrior: Wired for Life*; Colonel Bryan P. McCoy, *The Passion of Command*; Michelle Keener, *Shared Courage*; Gunnery Sergeant Robert Newman, USMCR, *Minefields to Microphones*; and Angela Brittain, *Don't Forget to Look Up*.

A benefit dinner, with proceeds going to support the 501(c)(3) projects of MarineParents.com, Inc. will be at the Adam's Mark Hotel on Saturday, April 21, 2007 from 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. Projects of the organization include Purple Heart Family Support™, The Care Package Project™, and Operation PAL™. The projects support Marines and their families during combat deployments and recovery from combat injuries. "Communities were asking us what they could do to support our troops" said Della Vecchia. "We developed appropriate programs to meet that community need, and which truly support the Marines."

Register to attend the conference or purchase Saturday benefit dinner tickets online at www.MarineConference.com or call the office at 573-449-2003. Full conference registration is \$195. Registration includes all meals and events from Friday evening through Sunday morning. Saturday benefit dinner tickets for those not attending the full conference are \$75.

MarineParents.com, Inc. provides support, information and services for Marines and their families, and encourages troop support through community awareness programs. The organization, a Missouri nonprofit corporation founded in January, 2003, is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) public charity. MarineParents.com is located at 2810 LeMone Industrial Boulevard in Columbia, Missouri. Additional information is available online at www.MarineParents.com or www.MarineConference.com.

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