

# MEDICAL NEWS

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## A day in the life of a caregiver

By MaryTherese Griffin  
*Warrior Care and Transition*

ARLINGTON, Va. - When your life changes on a dime as it often can, you tend to remember details. Army wife, best friend and now warrior care giver Linda Mills relives “that” day every day in vivid color.

“June 7, 2012. It was a summer day in Fayetteville, North Carolina. I can remember the exact outfit I had on at work that day: Black slacks, comfortable black high heels, and a mauve colored top. I remember feeling good that day. It was a Thursday—almost the weekend—and although I hadn’t heard from Drew (who was deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan), I wasn’t as worried as I normally was. It was a rough deployment, with a lot of people getting hurt, and although my friends and I could usually predict, sense, and fret over when there was a communication blackout (meaning someone got hurt or killed,) I never had my sixth sense that day. Ironic. I even remember snapping a picture of myself from my desk at work and emailing it to Drew—smiling and writing that I loved him. You know... the usual stuff you do when you’ve got a loved one deployed. Little did I know that Drew wouldn’t be checking his email that day, Linda recalled.

The love of her life Staff Sgt. Andrew Mills, a fifth generation military service member and Calvary reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition scout was on his third deployment. They had been married two years and were planning a life of kids, faith and happiness together. “Drew” had a plan.

“My plan was to definitely do more than 20 years. I joined December 28, 2004 because I wanted to serve my country and was also looking for something else to do with my life because I was tired of sitting in a classroom i.e. college,” said Drew.

Not an untypical answer for joining the Army. The outcome of Drew’s plan is also not typical. June 7, 2012 is a day he knew could come... all in service to his country.

“My radiotelephone operator stepped on a pressure plate improvised explosive device. The explosion killed a buddy we were carrying off the battlefield. Myself and my RTO received numerous injuries to include loss of limbs,” Drew said. “I lost consciousness, regained it and tried to administer self-aid but could not and crawled over to a buddy and asked him to do it for me. I then took off my armor and organized my sensitive items; left them on the ground for someone to

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(Naval Hospital Pensacola photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Brannon Deugan )

**Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Darren Cason, from Fallon, Nevada, applies a posterior upper-extremity plaster splint to a Sailor in Naval Hospital Pensacola’s Orthopedics Clinic. Plaster splints are usually used to stabilize broken bones.**

## Orthopedic Clinic keeps patients happy and active

By Petty Officer 1st Class Brannon Deugan  
*Naval Hospital Pensacola*

Naval Hospital Pensacola’s (NHP) Orthopedics Clinic offers treatment for a wide range of injuries to assist beneficiaries with orthopedic needs.

Orthopedics is the care and study of bone diseases as well as the repair and treatment of bones and musculoskeletal injuries.

“Orthopedic care is a huge need,” said Lt. Cmdr. Johnathan Williams, an orthopedic surgeon, NHP. “A large percentage of all emergency room and urgent care center visits are orthopedic complaints, and here

at the NHP Orthopedic Clinic we are happy to treat these patients once diagnosed.”

According to Williams, the Orthopedics Clinic is primarily concerned with two missions. The first mission focuses on active duty patients while the second mission is geared toward retirees and service member’s families.

“For the active duty patients, it is important to maintain or return patients as quickly as possible to full duty status so they can continue their mission,” said Williams. “Our second mission is to help retirees and

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## • Caregiver (Continued from front page)

for someone to collect and maintain accountability because I knew I was going getting on that bird (Medical Evacuation Helicopter) myself. Afterwards, I just laid there trying to keep my eyes open because I honestly did not know that if I closed them that I would wake back up”, said Drew as he described the explosion and its aftermath.

As Linda reflects today on her journey with Drew through 30 plus surgeries, a growing family with three children and the beginning of new chapters in their lives, she is reminded of the sacrifices. “It is overwhelming receiving news that your loved one was wounded in combat, and once you arrive at Walter Reed to be at their bedside, it is a complete whirlwind. You’re surrounded by medical personnel, volunteers, army staff, friends and family who want to visit,” Linda added.

“What I wish I would have done differently, throughout this whole process, even six years later, is more self-care. As a caregiver, you give your body, mind, and soul to the healing of your loved one, and

you often lose yourself and experience “caregiver burnout, Linda said.

“I would have rested more, taken more walks, read more, decompressed more, and lastly allowed others to help which is my top advice. I participated in a Caregiver Support Group at Fort Belvoir, and our motto was to “put the oxygen mask on yourself first,” said Linda.

Over the last six years her “honorary” career skills (as she calls them) acquired include nurse, physical and occupational therapist, counselor, professional note taker, chauffeur, scheduler, proud cheerleader, coach and advocate. Not the life she signed up for. Her husband also found new meaning through recovery knowing his career path and life plan took a hard left turn. As a caregiver subject matter expert Linda tries not to plan too much in advance because life does change on a dime.

“I still try to take it slowly and one day at a time. I’m currently enjoying being at home with Drew, the three kids, and we’re finally settled in our new home in Orange Beach, Alabama. I’d like to go back to work in the traditional sense eventually, either in healthcare, education, or with the military. But right now, being a caregiver and a mom is the most important, most trying, and most fulfilling job I’ve ever had,” she added.

## Military Medical News

P.O. Box A3434  
Chicago, IL 60690  
Phone: 312-368-4860  
Fax: 312-427-7829

To reach us:

advertising@militarymedical.com

Peter R. Bourjaily, Publisher

Jim Henry,  
Senior Account Manager  
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Account Executive  
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Account Executive  
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(Photos courtesy Linda Mills)

*Above; The Mills Family August 2018.*

*Left; Andrew and Linda Mills at Walter Reed circa 2012.*



## • Orthopedic (Continued from front page)

the families of service members to maintain or return to active and healthy lifestyles.”

The Orthopedics Clinic covers a wide span of orthopedic services to aid patients with living active and healthy lives. The clinic provides consultations and surgeries to include the hands, knees, hips, shoulders, feet and ankles.

“We offer too many surgeries to name,” said Williams, from Killeen, Texas. “But the majority of what we see here is orthopedics sports related injuries and arthritis.”

Sports related orthopedic injuries can include ankle sprains, tennis elbow, anterior cruciate ligament injuries, meniscus tears and shoulder dislocations. Arthritis refers to the wear and

tear of joints from a previous injury or age related changes. NHP’s Orthopedics Clinic is capable of providing full services on these conditions and more.

A common injury that is seen in the Orthopedic Clinic is broken bones. Broken bones need to be immobilized with a cast or splint to allow proper healing.

“Casting and splinting is our standard way of healing patients with broken bones,” said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Darren Cason, an orthopedic technician. “Casting and splinting is an art form. It is a skill that is learned over weeks and weeks of applied practice, and this is important to learn because the correct immobilization of the injury allows healing so the patient will not

need surgery.”

According to Cason, from Fallon, Nevada, three to five splints are applied daily to patients as well as continued practice and training to ensure the art form is developed and maintained.

“We do everything orthopedics related except for the spine,” said Williams. “We are willing and eager to provide care for our patients in the community.”

The Orthopedic Clinic is available to all TRICARE and Department of Veteran Affairs beneficiaries on a referral only basis. Patients will need to see their primary care provider to discuss referral options. For more information on receiving a referral to the Orthopedics Clinic, please contact the Health Benefits Office at 850-505-6709.

# Cancer survivor says knowledge is power

By Airman 1st Class Anne McCready  
47th Flying Training Wing Public Affairs

The solid gym doors swung open, spilling the warm, Texas evening light across the Losano Fitness Center carpet.

A woman with a lively step marched across the gym lobby down the hallway greeting the people she saw by name. She turned right into a room with mirrors, colorful mood lamps and a light, hardwood floor. A handful of women greeted her as they stretched and warmed up for the class.

“Hello, ladies!” she said, plugging her phone into a speaker. A lively beat began to pulse through the room as the Zumba class started.

Paloma Felan, a Zumba and spin instructor at Losano Fitness Center at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, is often seen by gym-goers as a fountain of energy and positivity.

Felan exudes enthusiasm and a willingness to help others. For those who stop and ask, she does not hesitate to slow down a moment and share her own experience battling a disease that would have taken her life if given the chance.

She knew she had a family history including cancer and being overweight. To counter this, she took an interest in leading a healthy lifestyle. Ever since she was a teenager, Felan valued staying busy and exercising.

When aerobics was becoming popular in the 1990’s, she became enthralled with it. As soon as she graduated high school, she jumped at the opportunity of becoming an aerobics instructor and earned her qualification.

Felan said she soon discovered she could only teach so many classes, which did not provide enough for the healthy lifestyle she wanted. She recognized true fitness requires more than working out — it also takes eating right, and nourishing the mind and spirit.

She began working at a grocery store to supplement her fitness job, and she has continued with both jobs for 25 years.

One evening in the summer of 2017, Felan flexed in front of her mirror after a gym workout, inspecting her progress and seeing which muscles needed more symmetry and balance.

“I noticed I had a lump on my left breast, and the nipple was slightly inverted,” Felan recalled. “The fact that they looked different was the biggest sign something was wrong. Everyone I knew told me, ‘No, it’s a caffeine deposit—women get them all the time before their period.’”

However, Felan was doubtful because her aunt had breast cancer, her father had prostate cancer and even her brother had cancer behind one of his eyes when he was a 1-year-old. She wasn’t about to take a chance.

Felan was anxious because she could tell something was off, so she took action and scheduled a mammogram. From there, she began her search for multiple opinions. They found the results were serious and



*Paloma Felan, Losano Fitness Center spin and Zumba instructor, leads a spin class during additional exercises at Losano Fitness Center at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas Oct. 5, 2018. Felan was hit with breast cancer in the summer of 2017, and she opted for a double mastectomy.*

(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Anne McCready)

recommended she go to San Antonio for confirmation.

“I ended up going to three different doctors,” Felan said. “Which is good because even doctors are human beings and can make mistakes.”

After the multiple mammograms and ultrasounds, a biopsy was scheduled. Its results returned from the lab Aug. 8, 2017, and the doctor diagnosed Felan with stage one breast cancer.

“When I was told by the doctor, ‘I have some good news and some bad news, your right breast is good—your left has cancer,’ I was taken aback,” she said. “But I just replied, ‘Fix me.’ That’s all I said.”

Even though Felan discovered her cancer early on, she chose to err on the side of caution and asked her doctor for a double mastectomy since she knew breast cancer was notorious for spreading from one side to the other.

On Oct. 11, 2017, she had the surgery.

Leading up to the double mastectomy, Felan underwent mammograms, ultrasounds, a biopsy, MRI, CT scan, and chest x-rays.

“They don’t put you under the knife right away, and that’s why you have to move fast,” she said. “They’re going to run a lot of tests before they touch you.”

Felan was anxious throughout the months of testing, afraid the cancer would spread. However, the doctors and nurses reassured her saying the important thing is that Felan caught it early on.

“So what did I do?” Felan asked. “I stayed busy. That’s my number one tip to anybody going through a health crisis. If you recoil, stay home, or cry, you’ll become sicker.”

She began going to appointments for the cancer. At these appointments in the oncol-

ogy waiting area, Felan saw other people living with cancer.

“There were some people who looked not-so-sick and others who looked very, very sick,” Felan described. “Everybody would ask questions, and everybody wanted to know why I was there because I didn’t look sick.”

Felan knows of many women who suspected they have cancer but waited too long to get medical help because they were embarrassed to go to the doctor, take off their clothes or to have people touch them.

“You have to get it checked,” she said. “It will get worse if you don’t. When you feel something or notice something’s not right, run.”

Since she chose a double mastectomy, she had also opted for reconstructive surgery.

“There are a lot of females who will go through chemo and radiation before they have their breasts removed, because they value their breast as a part of who they are,” Felan observed. “It’s sad that sometimes women feel like they’re just a piece of breast. You’re more than that.”

The procedure Felan went through to keep her volume was only possible because she had caught the cancer early, but also because she had been working out for three decades.

The surgery removing her breast tissue and ensuring the new tissue was accepted in her chest took 17 hours. The anesthesiologist was amazed how well she was able to take that much time under surgery.

“I think God prepared me,” she said. “In those few months, my 25 years of training came in handy. There are a lot of females all over the world the doctors can’t offer the option of reconstructive surgery to because they aren’t fit or healthy enough

for the additional surgery.”

Doctors told Felan the healing process would take six months to a year. They said she wouldn’t be able to raise her arms for a long time.

Felan was not one to take a hit. When she was told how long it would take to recover, she replied with a gusty, “Hell no — watch me.”

“For four months I really couldn’t move,” Felan recalled as she crouched over to illustrate an elderly person using a walker. “I was walking like a 90-year-old person, and I slept in a recliner at a 45-degree angle.”

Her steps to recovery were small at first. During the first four months afterward, she walked. Even though it was difficult, she would keep walking.

While Felan was healing, much of the help she received came from her sister and sister-in-law.

“I know what it is to lose mobility,” she stated. “I like working, I like moving. It’s horrible to depend on others for everything.”

Even so, it took Felan a mere four months before she began rediscovering her norm. She’s developed a heightened value for the small things in life like being able to stand up tall, take long showers, and go to work.

Sitting next to the other oncology patients, Felan knows what cancer for her could have been. She saw their steady and often quick decline. She saw their loss of hair and the pain in their eyes. She knows what it is to have cancer and what it is to start the fight before the disease does.

Felan continues the fight against cancer by being aware and making others aware as well.



## FEDVIP

# Frequently Asked Questions

- What is FEDVIP?
  - » The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) is the insurance program available to those who are currently enrolled in the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP), which ends permanently on 31 December 2018.
- Who can enroll to FEDVIP?
  - » Retirees can enroll to both the Vision and Dental plans. Active Duty Dependents can enroll to Vision. Active Duty cannot enroll to any of them.
- Can I re-enroll to Delta Dental?
  - » Yes, you will need to re-enroll during open season.
- Do I need to cancel my old TRDP?
  - » No it will automatically expire.
- How Can I enroll to FEDVIP?
  - » From 12 November 2018 – 10 December 2018, visit [TRICARE.benefeds.com](http://TRICARE.benefeds.com) and follow the instructions online to enroll to a plan of your choice.

**For More Information About FEDVIP Visit:**  
[tricare.benefeds.com](http://tricare.benefeds.com)

## Compare 2019 FEDVIP Dental, Vision Plans Ahead of Open Season

In 2019, dental and vision insurance plans for retirees and their families will be available through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). If you're eligible, the first opportunity to enroll in a plan is during the Federal Benefits Open Season. This will take place from Nov. 12 to Dec. 10. Prepare for Federal Benefits Open Season now by reviewing the 2019 FEDVIP plan options and rates. If you want FEDVIP dental coverage in 2019, you must make a plan choice and enroll during the Federal Benefits Open Season.

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will only be available until Dec. 31, 2018. The last day to enroll in TRDP is Nov. 30, 2018.

FEDVIP offers 10 dental and four vision carriers to choose from. Use the FEDVIP Plan Comparison Tool to help you determine what plans are right for you and your family. The tool allows you to compare plans available in your area based on monthly premium rates, benefits (in-network vs. out-of-network), deductibles, and annual maximums. The tool lets you compare up to three plans side-by-side.

### Who is Eligible for FEDVIP?

- Retired service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP are eligible to enroll in a FEDVIP dental plan. They're also eligible to enroll in a FEDVIP vision plan if enrolled in a TRICARE health plan.
- Family members of active duty service members who are enrolled in a TRICARE health plan can enroll in a FEDVIP vision plan.
- Children enrolled in or eligible for TRICARE Young Adult aren't eligible for FEDVIP.

If you're not sure if you can enroll in FEDVIP, use the FEDVIP Eligibility Tool. The tool allows you to check to see if you're eligible for FEDVIP dental, vision, or both.

To learn more about FEDVIP, read frequently asked questions, and sign up for updates. Get familiar with 2019 FEDVIP plans and rates. Doing these things will help you take command of your health and help you prepare for 2019.

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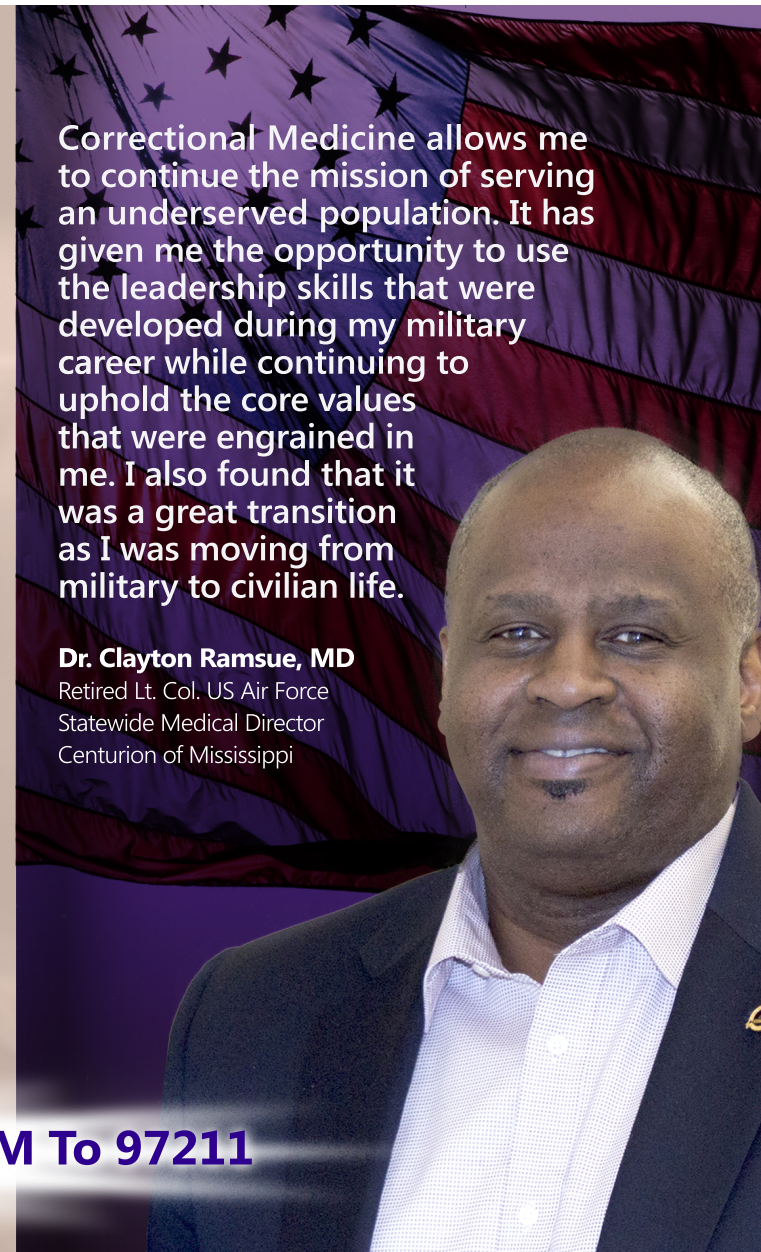
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# Smile, it's dental hygiene month



(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Milton Hamilton)

**Master Sgt. Kara Shores, 86th Dental Squadron Chief of Preventive Dentistry, flosses Airman 1st Class Blake Duty's teeth, showing part of the annual teeth cleaning procedure on Ramstein Air Base, Germany, Oct. 11, 2018. Dental Hygiene month celebrates the work dental hygienists do and helps raise awareness on the importance of good oral health.**

By Airman 1st Class Milton Hamilton  
86th Airlift Wing/Public Affairs

The 86th Ramstein Dental Clinic is promoting Dental Hygiene Month for the month of October.

Dental Hygiene month is an effort to celebrate the work dental hygienists do and helps raise awareness on the importance of good oral health.

"This year, the clinic is focusing on four routines that can help people maintain healthy smiles, such as brushing, flossing, rinsing, and chewing," said Master Sgt. Kara Shores, 86th Dental Squadron Chief of Preventive Dentistry.

Dental hygiene refers to the practice of keeping the mouth, teeth, and gums clean to prevent disease.

Some common mistakes people make are using the wrong toothbrush, which can cause gums to shrink away and recede faster than usual, said Shores.

"Skipping flossing or only flossing before a dentist appointment puts you at a higher risk of periodontal disease and early tooth loss," said Shores.

Other ways of ensuring good oral health

include eating regular nutritious meals, avoiding frequent between meal-snacking, and protecting your teeth with fluoride by using fluoride toothpaste and drinking fluorinated water, said Shores. Although, in Germany there is no fluoride in the water.

"Rinsing your teeth can also help eliminate biofilm and bacteria that brushing and flossing cannot," said Shores. The chance of dental decay and infection is reduced by rinsing often and chewing sugarless gum for 20 minutes following meals.

Sometimes people don't know when to go to the dentist or how often to go.

"On base services provide examinations and cleanings once per year for active duty military, unless a patient has other periodontal needs. If service members prefer cleanings twice per year, many commercial dental insurance policies cover two cleanings per year," said Shores.

Dental Hygiene Month is important because it spreads awareness and educates patients about the concerns regarding their oral health, said Shores. Dentists and dental hygienists just want their patients to be happy and healthy.

## NMCS D nurse scientists win nursing publication award

By Petty Officer 2nd Class  
Indra Beaufort  
Naval Medical Center San Diego

SAN DIEGO— Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) nurse scientists were recently announced that they will be presented with the 2018 RDML Mary F. Hall award for nursing publication.

Cmdr. Wendy Cook, Nurse Corps scientist and head of Nursing Research and Analysis at Clinical Investigation department at NMCS D, and Cmdr. Abigail Yablonsky, principal investigator for Naval Health Research Center's Directorate for Military Population Health, are winners for this year's highly acclaimed nursing publication award.

"It's a great feeling," said Cook, who has won the RDML Mary F. Hall award two years in a row. "I am delighted to have two separate publications recognized two years in a row, especially because I am aware of the high quality of the other nominated publications."

The RDML Mary F. Hall Award is an award created to recognize Navy nurses who contribute to nursing through professional publications.

"Winning this award is significant for two reasons," said Senior Nurse Researcher at NMCS D Capt. Heather King. "First, this is a highly competitive award open to all Navy Nurse Corps Officers. Second, two of our nurse scientists received this award, which highlights the research that is done to enhance the care of servicemembers," said King.

According to King, there are currently four nurse scientists working at NMCS D.

Active duty nurses, reservists, Department of Veterans Affairs nurses, and DoD Federal civilian registered nurses, are among those eligible to submit published works for recognition.

"Both Cmdr. Cook and Cmdr. Yablonsky have been wonderful to work with," said King. "They are dedicated nurse scientists who continually strive to create and disseminate new knowledge to benefit our NMCS D service members and beneficiaries."

Award categories include peer-reviewed and non peer-reviewed publications. Peer reviewed, also known as scholarly articles, require a panel of professional experts in the field relating to the article topic to conduct a rigorous review of the manuscript before the article is accepted for the publication. Non peer-reviewed publications are not reviewed by professional experts in the field, but are typically reviewed

by journalism editors. Examples include newspaper articles, newsletters, letters to the editor, and popular magazine articles.

For non-peer reviewed category, Cmdr. Yablonsky won first place for her publication on "Research, Readiness, and Military Parents", published by the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. Cmdr. Cook was one of the co-authors who received first runner up in the peer-reviewed category for research findings on "U.S. Military Service Members' Reasons for Deciding to Participate in

Health Research", published on Research in Nursing and Health.

Awardees will each receive a congratulatory letter from the Director, Navy Nurse Corps, and selection results will be highlighted on milSuite and in the Nurse Corps Newsletter.

For more information on Naval Medical Center San Diego visit <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcsd/Pages/default.aspx>.

For more news from Naval Medical Center San Diego, visit [www.navy.mil/local/sd/](http://www.navy.mil/local/sd/).

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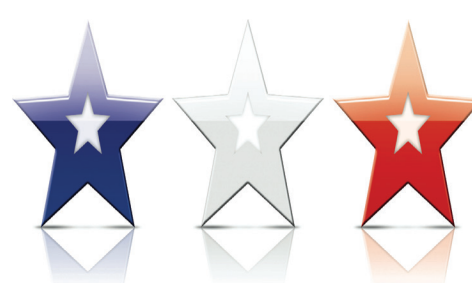
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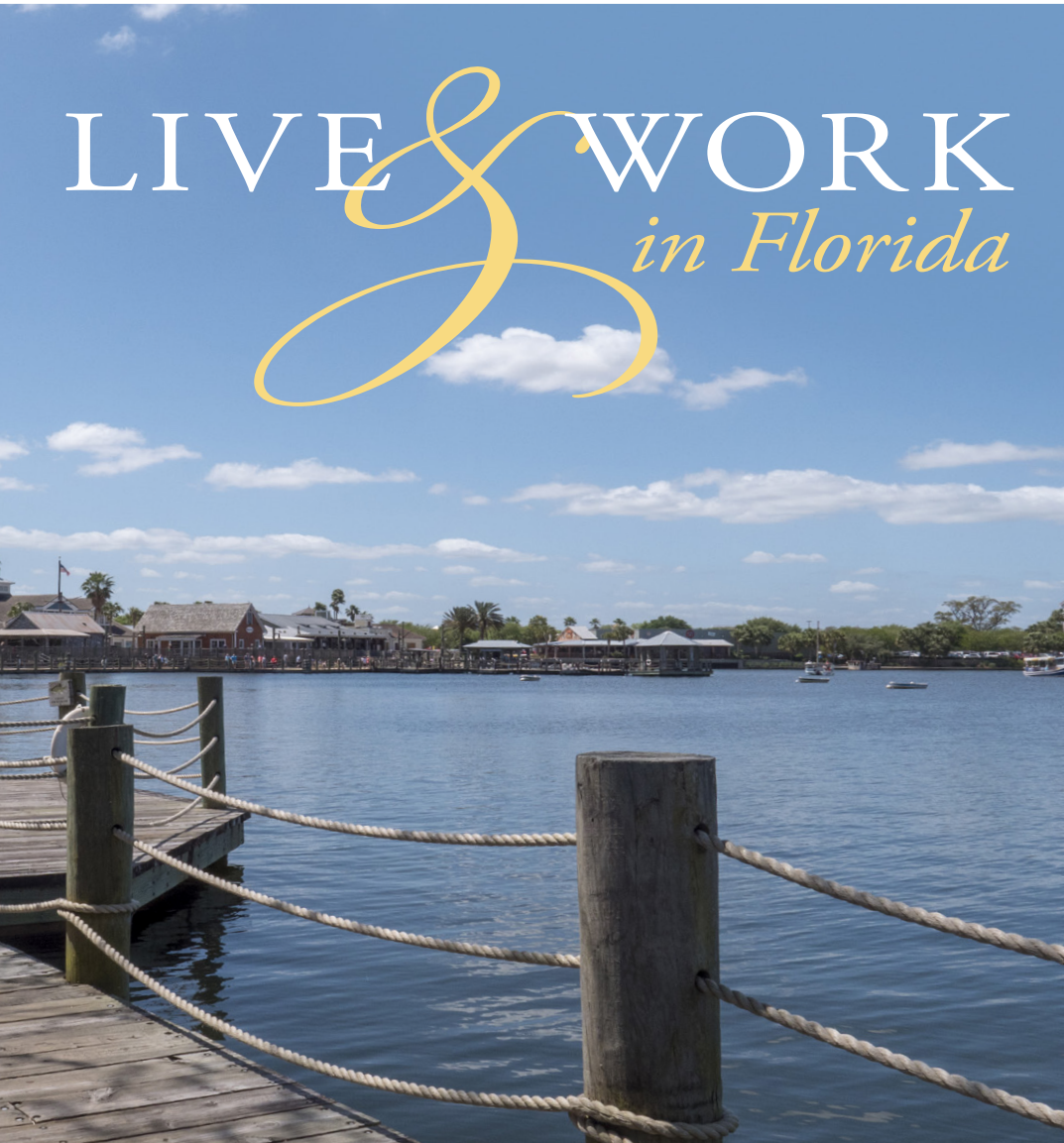
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