Ribbon cutting opens newly constructed Single Enlisted Barracks

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

NAS Patuxent River leadership and project team members ceremoniously cut the ribbon Aug. 21 to officially open the installation’s newly constructed 100,000-square foot-plus Single Enlisted Barracks. Located at the corner of Buse and Cuddihy Roads, the 73-unit facility — including four ADA rooms — will comfortably house more than 200 single Sailors, E-4 and below.

“The rooms are somewhat smaller than an apartment and are kind of set up like a university dorm room,” explained Ross Keene, Pax River housing director. “They’re a bit trendier than the former barracks and will give service members more of a ‘home’ feel.”

Individual units — which hold four Sailors — consist of two bedrooms, each with a dedicated bathroom, and a shared common living room, full kitchen and washer/dryer. In addition, the building houses three multipurpose rooms for Sailors to gather and enjoy camaraderie, large screen televisions and games, with another two reading rooms allowing them the opportunity to quietly study or browse the internet.

“Outside the barracks in the courtyard is a gazebo, seating, storage lockers, a grilling area, and an NCAA regulation sized basketball court,” Keene said.

“The new construction meets Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection requirements and is a ‘high energy-efficient building meeting and exceeding the Silver’ designation for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program,” explained Robert Cipolloni, Pax River NAVFAC Washington construction manager for the project.

The barracks implements a key part of the Installation Development Plan by moving Sailors out of current 1970s-era facilities located in the Accident Potential Zone at the end of Runway 6, where berthing is not a compatible land use, said Public Works Officer Cdr. Grant Watanabe.

“And they’re located just across the street from our Commissary, NEX, Navy Lodge and future facilities which will make up our Town Center,” Watanabe added.

“The new barracks was designed and built to be a livable residence and the planners, architects, and construction workers have succeeded,” said Jeff Sias, N9 director at Pax River. “This is something we can all be proud of for generations to come.”

Residents are expected to begin moving into the barracks Sept. 1.

NMCRS launches new loan to help with education supplies

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In response to today’s unique times and the ever-changing needs of its Sailor and Marine clients, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) has introduced a new interest-free loan to help families deal with the expense of home schooling during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Home Learning Assistance for Family Members loan was developed to help families cover the expenses they may need for home learning, such as computers, internet access, supplies, workbooks and tutoring — something that had previously been offered only on a case by case basis with headquarters approval.

“I’m excited about this because it shows how NMCRS always monitors what’s going on with our military families and how we work to update our policies to meet changing needs through how we handle our assistance and what we offer assistance for,” said Maureen Farrell, director of the NMCRS office located on board NAS Patuxent River.

The loan, capped at $1500, is available to active-duty and retired military families with dependent children in grades K through 12 and fulltime dependent college students up to age 23.

“We recommend the hardware technology be economical because clients must remember that although this is an interest-free loan, they will have to repay it,” Farrell added. “They don’t have to take out a loan for the full $1500; only what they need.

And the repayment can be spread out up to 12 months.”

In an effort to mitigate physical interaction between clients and staff during the pandemic, NMCRS had already waived the usual sit-down budget preparation step and switched to electronic forms and verification via email for its rapid response loans.

“To get the loan, people need to call for an appointment and we’ll give them all the information and email them the necessary forms,” Farrell said. “They’ll send back the required verification and we’ll do all the work prior to them coming into the office, where we’ll then write them a check and send them on their way.”

Farrell also noted that, while in the office, all COVID-19 precautions are being followed.

“There’s a sign outside our office asking people to stop and use hand sanitizer before entering, and of course face coverings are required and we’re observing 6-feet of physical distance whenever possible,” she said. “We’re observing all of the safety guidelines for the good of our clients and our staff.”

NMCRS is continuously looking to improve how their programs can best be handled.

“This whole school thing is a conundrum for everyone,” Farrell added. “If we can do a little bit to help people out and feel more comfortable with whatever environments they’ve chosen to explore this school year, then good for us and good for them.”

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