# Group offers parental support, playtime for tots

**By Ms. Adriene M. Dicks**
*Correspondent*

It's been said children need to be with other children. But when adults have children, they may end up spending more time with little ones than with people their own age. The Family Support Center and Family Advocacy co-sponsor a program allowing children and parents to spend time with each other.

Time for Tots meets Thursdays from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at the Youth Center. Children can participate until they become school-aged.

According to Kay Martinez, FSC family work/life consultant, Time for Tots is good for families who are separated due to deployments.

"Shaw is a big deployment base. Families can feel isolated when one parent is away. This group provides the support they need," said Ms. Martinez.

Marcy Prior, the group's coordinator and wife of Tech. Sgt. James Prior, 20th Component Maintenance Squadron, said the purpose of the group is to give parents who stay at home the opportunity to meet other parents and not feel detached.

"Some of these parents are very young and their spouses are at work all day. They can feel very alone being at home with a baby and no one to talk to," said Mrs. Prior. "This is a safe place for their children to play and it gives them somewhere to go every week and meet other parents. We bounce ideas off each other and share tips."

Mrs. Prior became coordinator for Time for Tots after sharing the job with a neighbor who PCSed. She continued the job because of something her neighbor said about working with the group.

"My neighbor told me she worked with the group because she knew her children were getting something out of it," said Mrs. Prior. "And I continue to do this because my children, other children and parents get something positive out of it."

Ms. Martinez said Mrs. Prior has turned the program into a group that reaches out and takes the extra step for those families that need it. Ms. Martinez says Time for Tots is full of parents who understand what other parents are going through and are there to share and listen.

"We know coming into a new situation can be intimidating," said Mrs. Prior. "But everyone has been new at one point and had to come in knowing no one. All you need to do is take that first step. Just come and we will make you feel comfortable."

Being a part of the group can also be educational for the children, according to Mrs. Prior. Each week, she plans a project for the toddlers to do in addition to having play time.

"Making the activities educational just happens. My father was a teacher and a principal and I studied education in college. Education is just a part of me," said Mrs. Prior. "The projects we do touch on the basics of what children need to know when they start school, including colors, shapes and numbers. I always have something planned for them to do but I don't force it on them. Sometimes children just want to play and that's OK."

*Photo by Ms. Adriene M. Dicks*

**Moms and toddlers share playtime during a recent Time for Tots meeting.**

For more information on Time for Tots, call Ms. Martinez at **895-1252** or Mrs. Prior at **499-2656**.

# Annual celebration recognizes continued customs

**By Ms. Adriene M. Dicks**
*Correspondent*

Throughout Black History Month, accomplishments and contributions of black Americans are remembered and celebrated. Those who came before us are studied in schools and spoken of at special events. However, cultures and traditions that still continue today in black communities are also recognized.

Until the end of February, the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association will host its Eighth Annual Native Islander Gullah Celebration, a month-long event in Hilton Head, S.C., which recognizes the history and culture of Native Island Gullah people.

The Gullah celebration started in 1996 as a way to celebrate the culture and create economic development opportunities for minority business owners. Throughout the month, visitors have the opportunity to experience the food, music, dance, stories, history and traditions of Gullah people. According to James Mitchell, president and chief executive officer of the Native Islander Gullah Celebration Committee, the purpose of the event is to help people get an understanding of the culture and specifically recognize customs special to the Native Island Gullahs of Hilton Head.

The cultural demonstrations include sweet grass basket sewing, casting-net weaving and indigo dyeing. Entertainment includes traditional African dance, gospel music and storytelling. The largest event of the Gullah celebration is the Arts, Crafts and Food Expo, scheduled for Feb. 14 and 15, when visitors can experience two full days of entertainment, art, food and demonstrations. According to Mr. Mitchell, during these two days people will see what makes Gullah culture unique.

The word Gullah identifies the people, language and traditions. Gullah people are descendants of those brought from the coast of West Africa. The language was developed among Africans who needed a way to communicate with Africans from other tribes and Europeans. In studying the language, Lorenzo Dow Turner discovered in the 1930s Gullah was derived from English and more than 4,000 words from different African languages. It is still spoken by more than 100,000 people along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. Gullah is described as a blend of West African culture, combined with European and Native American influences.

For more information on the Native Islander Gullah Celebration, call **(877) 650-0676** or visit **www.gullahcelebration.com**.

## Examples of Gullah words

chillun -- *translation*, children

'leb'n -- *translation*, eleven

mout' -- *translation*, mouth

box-up -- *translation*, closed tightly

(Courtesy of charlestonblackheritage.com.)

# Celebrate Valentine's Day the healthy way

**By Staff Sgt. Alicia Prakash**
*Staff writer*

Valentine's Day is fast approaching and from gas stations to discount stores, pink and red-boxed chocolates and heart-shaped candies are easy to spot. As easy as it is to pick up the sweet goodies, it is just as easy to pick up the weight. So, instead of fattening eats, why not treat your valentine with a healthy gift?

"Healthy eating should be a permanent lifestyle — not to exclude Valentine's Day," said Tech. Sgt. Tedisha Baker, Health and Wellness Center health promotions NCO in charge and nutrition counselor.

Tech Sgt. Edward McNeil, 20th Mission Support Squadron, said he would not get his wife anything to interfere with her diet.

"A candlelight, low-fat dinner is a good idea," he said.

Sgt. McNeil, married nearly seven years, suggests buying a recipe book composed of menus correlating with a weight-conscious valentine's diet.

Alternatives to common edible Valentine's Day gifts may lend additional options.

"We don't do sweets," said Senior Airman Idella Maddox, 20th Fighter Wing.

She said neither she nor her husband of two weeks eat a lot of candy, so she always opts for different Valentine's Day gifts.

"I plan to get him something durable, something he can use," said the newlywed.

For the valentine who must have chocolate, Sgt. Baker recommends choices including chocolate-covered fruit like strawberries and cherries.

Another option is enjoying frozen yogurt with fruit instead of ice cream and cake.

Sgt. Baker also suggests if you plan to drink alcohol, do so in moderation, with one or two glasses only.

For a non-alcoholic drink, she says to opt for fruit juice or water.

Even though cutting out fattening treats may be the healthy way to go, some dieters think differently.

"If I receive chocolate for Valentine's Day, I would eat it," said Mrs. Debbie Ward, 20th Comptroller Squadron.

She said she has reached her desired weight and when she does splurge on tasty, but not-so-good-for-you foods, she exercises it off immediately.

Mrs. Ward said no matter what her husband of 15 years gives her for Valentine's Day, she will accept and appreciate it.

Whether Valentine's Day means continuing or taking a break from a healthy lifestyle, enjoy the day.

## *Choose non-edible gifts for your valentine*

- *Jewelry*
- *Stuffed animals*
- *Balloons*
- *Movie tickets*

- *Dancing date*
- *Flowers*
- *A professional massage*
- *A book by a favorite author*

# 9th Air Force/USCENTAF command chief retires

From the moment he entered the Air Force, he's been fixing things; starting with aircraft parts and ending with issues airmen confront. But after 18 months as 9th Air Force/United States Central Command Air Forces command chief, and nearly 28 years in the Air Force, Chief Master Sgt. Mack Williams is retiring.

During his tenure as command chief, Chief Williams has spent most of his time on the road, visiting airmen in places such as Baghdad and Bagram, Kirkuk and Khandahar, and al Dhafra or al Udeid.

"The one constant among airmen I spoke to was their dedication to the mission," Chief Williams said. "That's why I feel so good about retiring. I know the future of our Air Force is in good hands."

Chief Williams, a 45-year-old Louisburg, N.C., native, came to the job after a one-year tour as wing command chief at Prince Sultan Air Base, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He credits that job with providing him the experience necessary to thrive at USCENTAF.

"This was definitely the pinnacle of my career," he said. "I was able to capitalize on my maintenance background. I love the challenge of fixing things. It's where I developed my supervisory and mentoring skills."

His role as command chief is to make sure the enlisted force has the tools they need to make the mission happen. Chief Williams found no matter what task you threw to the young enlisted people, they were willing to tackle it head on.

"I love our airmen. They excel every day under uncertain circumstances in places most people never want to see," he said. "They are professionals, whether they're launching and recovering aircraft or doing maintenance or clerical work. They understand freedom and democracy require sacrifice and they are willing to put their lives on the line for America and freedom-loving people."

Sacrifice and service is something Chief Williams understands. In the last 540 days, he's been deployed or TDY approximately 350 of them.

Reflecting on his nearly 30 years of service, Chief Williams said, "Compared to other services, we're in our infancy. Like airmen before me, what we've done over the last half century is lay a foundation. It's now time to build on that foundation. I know America is in great shape where air power is concerned."

Dispensing advice comes naturally to the chief, who reminds all airmen they need to take care of each other.

"Few people are as important as the airman next to you," he said. "We're a family with one heartbeat. No matter how tough things get at home or while deployed, you'll be stronger working hand-in-hand."

The "can-do" attitude and efforts the chief brought to the job will be missed after his departure.

"Chief Williams is a true warrior, fighting every step along the way for the welfare of our airmen," said Lt. Gen. Buck Buchanan, 9th Air Force/USCENTAF commander. "He is a world-class professional and will be truly missed. The impact he's had on our operations is immeasurable."

Upon retirement, Chief Williams plans to move on to the business world in the Dallas area. But fading quietly off into the horizon is pretty much out of the question, he said. "There is a lot left to Mack Williams," he added. "The Air Force gave me a lot of skills and made me a stronger person. As my time wearing the uniform ends, know that no other Air Force could have done what airmen have done during the course of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. Wear that badge of honor with pride and keep making America proud." *(Information courtesy of 9th Air Force Public Affairs.)*

**Chief Williams**

# 20th CONS gives purchase power to Shaw

**By Airman 1st Class Susan Penning**
*Editor*

Most large companies hire professionals whose sole job is to get the company products or services it needs at the best price. Did you know Shaw also has a team of experts who do the same?

The 20th Contracting Squadron conducts contract operations in combat environments while providing contracting support to the 20th Fighter Wing, 9th Air Force/United States Central Command Air Forces and 24 associate units, according to its mission statement.

"We provide purchasing power for Shaw and help organizations on base complete their mission by getting them the supplies, equipment and services they need," said Master Sgt. Michael Ventura, 20th CONS superintendent and 1st Sergeant.

According to Maj. Christopher Daniels, 20th CONS commander, the squadron currently supports approximately 40 military and civilian employees while overseeing approximately 500 contracted employees and executing $124 million in contracts annually.

*Photo by Airman 1st Class Susan Penning*

**Airman 1st Class Jason Boudreaux (left), 20th Contracting Squadron, conducts a labor standards interview Jan. 23 with Offern Davis, a contracted worker at the Frierson Gate. The interview is required for contractors working on government installations and ensures proper labor practices.**

The squadron has two flights: Plans and Programs, and Acquisition, Maj. Daniels said.

The Plans and Programs flight, which currently has six people working in it, manages three sections: the Government Purchase Card program, which allows customers to take care of purchases under $2,500; Standard Procurement System management, which keeps tabs and reports on contracts awarded at Shaw; and Quality Assurance, which oversees base service contracts and ensures contractors are practicing proper labor policies.

The Acquisition flight is made up of four teams: Team A, the Services Team, currently has seven contracting employees on it. This team handles any service contract totaling more than $100,000. The new dining facility and base library renovation are recent examples of projects Team A managed.

Team B is the Civil Engineering Team. This team handles individual requirements of the 20th Civil Engineer Squadron totaling more than $100,000. Team B focuses on construction services projects on base and has 11 people working on it at this time. Employing grounds equipment personnel to maintain the base landscaping is an example of a contract Team B handles.

Team C is the Competitive Sourcing and Privatization Team. It currently has two people working on it, and is concentrating its energy on Shaw's housing privatization project.

Team D, the Simplified Acquisition Team, currently has seven members and handles requirements on base costing less than $100,000.

In addition to teams working on base, a vital role 20th CONS plays is deploying members in support of the war.

"We currently have four members deployed," said Maj. Daniels. "A base cannot be built up or torn down without our personnel on scene. Air Force contingency contracting officers are the premier contracting people for the military."

According to Sgt. Ventura, three types of contracts cross the desk of CONS: commodities contracts, which deal with supply purchases such as furniture or computers; construction contracts, for most construction projects on base; and services contracts, such as contracting employees to work in the dining facility and Recycling Center on base.

According to Maj. Daniels, each 20th CONS member is designated by the Air Force as a Certified Acquisition Professional. This title is earned through a business degree and/or 24 business credit hours, experience and continual education through the Defense Acquisition University or other approved institutes of higher learning.

Additional field training includes writing up purchase orders and contracts, said Sgt. Ventura. Members also learn how to speak professionally to customers and act as business advisors.

"Our key is to develop into professional ambassadors in blue," Sgt. Ventura said.

"You have to be a go-getter and have tremendous initiative in this field," he continued. "We are the stewards of the taxpayer's dollar."

According to Sgt. Ventura, one of the most difficult parts of contracting is explaining to customers why it sometimes takes a while to get them the product or service they need. "We have many laws and requirements to fulfill," he said. "We do a best-value determination on all prospective contractors. We look at past performance and other key factors to decide who we should offer a job to. There is more to getting the best value than handing a contract over to the lowest bidder, and this takes some time."

As a result of the 20th CONS commitment to Shaw this past year, the squadron recently earned the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act of 1971, President's Committee Award for Air Combat Command and is now competing at the Air-Force level. The award came after 20th CONS worked to create employment opportunities at Shaw for more than 120 blind or severely-disabled people.

In addition, in fiscal year 2002, 20th CONS was named Outstanding Contracting Unit for ACC.

The 20th CONS is a valuable asset to Shaw, said Airman 1st Class Jason Boudreaux, 20th CONS contract administrator. "Saving Shaw money is our job. That's important, so quality of life can continue to improve and the mission is performed effectively."

# Spirit Spotlight

## Airman 1st Class Tommy Garcia

**Organization:** 20th Medical Group
**Duty title:** Aerospace medical technician
**Job duties:** Ambulance service
**Hometown:** Miami, Fla.
**Time in service:** Two years
**Off-duty interests:** Attending classes and going to the gym

**Words I live by:** "It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them." -- Mark Twain

## Staff Sgt. Antwan Mabry

**Organization:** 20th Maintenance Group
**Duty title:** Weapons Standardization lead crew member
**Job duties:** Train, certify and evaluate weapons personnel
**Hometown:** Chicago
**Time in service:** Seven years
**Family:** Wife, Annette and son, Kawan
**Off-duty interests:** Spending time with family, working out and bowling

**Words I live by:** "Make every second count, because tomorrow is not promised."