

30 January 2008

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the time of our school year midshipmen affectionately deem “the Dark Ages.” Longer nights and shorter days, cold weather, and the length of time between reform and spring break make this time of year especially arduous for many of our midshipmen. While First Class midshipmen are often focused on tackling the obstacles in their path to commissioning, now might be a good time to send your mid a kind letter or care package to make him or her smile on a dreary Dark Age day.

Our *Beat the Dark Ages* Concert on 25 January was a huge success. Campus Magazine nominated magician Justin Kredible for “Entertainer of the Year” and “Best Live Novelty Performer”. Comedy hypnotist and mentalist Joshua Seth performed a fast-paced, high energy show that kept the midshipmen on the edge of their seats from start to finish. These two acts have been performing at the Academy for years and have proven to be a conversation piece for weeks after their shows. Additionally, our Food Service Division hosted a special *Beat the Dark Ages* Surf and Turf dinner with an ice cream bar for dessert.

Our Superintendent, Vice Admiral Fowler, is hosting casual dinners for the First Class midshipmen by service assigned community. Naval Aviators and Surface Warriors have had their dinners allowing time for new community members to interact with each other, staff, and faculty in a casual community specific setting. Wearing civilian clothing and taking an evening to enjoy polite dining, the positive feedback has been overwhelming. This Thursday the midshipmen selected for Marine Corps will have their dinner shortly followed by the remaining service communities in the coming weeks.

The Naval Academy will host its annual Leadership Conference from 4 February to 6 February. Since 1984, the Naval Academy has hosted an annual leadership conference for senior cadets and midshipmen from each of the service academies. In 2002, the conference expanded to include students from civilian universities and broadened its scope to include leadership topics relevant to government, business, and academia, as well as the military. The conference theme of "Leadership Beyond Barriers" acknowledges the importance of diversity in organizations. It emphasizes the key role leaders play in building and maintaining a culture that accomplishes the mission and achieves goals, yet one that values and promotes the potential of all.

On Saturday, 26 January, the Brigade of Midshipmen suffered a tragic loss. Midshipman Second Class Anthony J. Valliere, of Palatine, IL died of injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident. My staff and I are deeply saddened by this sudden loss and our most sincere sympathies and condolences go out to his family and friends.

I encourage you to talk with your midshipman as loss affects us all differently; I appreciate your continued support throughout the Dark Ages. Some significant activities in February are: Six-week exams from 11-15 February, Orders Assignment Night on 21 February, Brigade Boxing Finals on 22 February, Women's and Men's Basketball at Army on 23 February, and our Black History Month Banquet on 24 February.

Margaret D. Klein
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commandant of Midshipmen