

## COMMAND IDEAS

*The following are a few ideas and tips that we've incorporated during our time in O-5 command. This template came from Mrs. Linda Desens who was the CO Spouse of the 26<sup>th</sup> MEU. She spoke at the Spouse Workshop when I took it, and have modified it to reflect the changes that have taken place over the last three years and I incorporated into it what Chip and I felt was important during our O5 command. I hope that when you have the opportunity to be a facilitator that you will also take this template and carry on the tradition. I have learned many of these ideas from other CO spouses, who have been both friends and mentors. These are NOT "must-do's." You will find your own unique ways of approaching command. There is no one right way of doing things. Congratulations to you all as you embark on this journey! I know that you all will be fabulous!*

Idea/Tip	Description	Timeframe/Notes
Department Head Party with spouses	Command department heads and their spouses	Soon after taking command
Subordinate Elements Party	CO's, XO, Sgt. Majors and spouses	Soon after taking command or after the chop (for MEUs)
Family Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decide on your role</li> <li>▪ CO conduct Family Readiness Meeting with Family Readiness Team (we included the Fam. Readiness Assts; some CO's open it up to all family members and some to the MCCS Coordinator)</li> <li>▪ Discuss Family Readiness "Family" events with FRO. Start planning events soon especially if deployment is soon (The FRO and the Fam Readiness Assts can do all this, but you can provide input if you'd like)</li> <li>▪ Command should host a family day for the entire command</li> <li>▪ Optional (for composite commands): Meet w/CO's &amp; Spouses, FRO's</li> <li>▪ There is funding for an annual volunteer appreciation luncheon. The FRO will coordinate this.</li> </ul>	Soon after taking command
Meet the CO night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For spouses</li> <li>▪ Introduce Command Team</li> <li>▪ Recruit Family Readiness Assistants and volunteers.</li> <li>▪ Pass out applications for FRA positions. Highly recommend that the CO and the FRO interview the FRA applicants before appointing them. Also that they take all the training before they interview, this shows a willingness to want the job and gets them into the job faster after the interview</li> </ul>	Within 1-2 months after taking command
Spouses Social Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Depending on the size of your unit and location, it can be all spouses (i.e, Officer &amp; Enlisted) Icebreakers - plan on some fun icebreakers to get people mingling and talking to each other.</li> <li>▪ Sign-up sheets for hosting events or coordinator, meals, other activities</li> <li>▪ Decide if you want to have a social roster.</li> </ul>	Consider doing again before deployment; a Town Hall type question & answer
Communication s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decide with CO, communication channels that you'll use. We use:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>E-Marine:</b> For official command messages (FRO takes care of this) BUT, you should have a log in and know how the system works. Family members of Marines can also have a login as well. Understand</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Soon after taking a command.  Continue monthly or quarterly depending on participation  Within 3 months of command  Contact your PAO for USMC

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	<p>how this system works so you can explain it to others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Facebook:</b> The Battalion had an official FB page (run by our FRO)</li> <li>▪ <b>Facebook:</b> The Spouse Club had a Closed FB page that was maintained by the Spouse Club Board.</li> <li>▪ <b>Battalion Website:</b> <a href="http://www.1stmardiv.marines.mil/Units/3DAABN.aspx">http://www.1stmardiv.marines.mil/Units/3DAABN.aspx</a> (run by 1st Mar Div. Battalion would give them info &amp; they would update the site)</li> <li>▪ <b>MOL</b> (Marine Online): For official records (Marine updates, and FRO also gets information from this area)</li> <li>▪ <b>Meetup.com</b> (<a href="http://www.meetup.com">www.meetup.com</a>). The Spouse Club created (and paid for) a private group on Meetup.com to post spouse club events that were taking place for the spouse club. We only allowed Spouses and our Marines access to this site.</li> </ul>	<p>policy regarding use of social media platforms</p> <p>Create a separate FB account just for yourself while you are the CO Spouse. Create a new email account as well, it really makes things much easier.</p>
<p>Gifts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>For Baby- Bibs</b> with unit logo, Baby Certificate and a mock Marine Corps Orders to the baby from CO. The FRO or Adjutant puts these in the nice USMC certificate covers. Depending on the size of your unit you can write a handwritten note to the baby too (I've attached all of these documents)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://www.cafepress.com/marineparentinc/s_26th%20meu_baby-bibs">http://www.cafepress.com/marineparentinc/s_26th%20meu_baby-bibs</a> (Do a search for unit. If not there, call the company to see if they can put your unit's logo on a bib if you send them the graphic file.</li> <li>○ <a href="http://www.cafepress.com/marineparentinc/6246144">http://www.cafepress.com/marineparentinc/6246144</a> Look for your unit. There are other gifts like porcelain ornaments and baby onesies. I've bought the unit porcelain ornament and put them in an inexpensive box from Michaels. They were a hit and not very expensive. This site is worth taking a look at.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <b>Flowers:</b> The Marines at work will take up a collection for flowers (e.g. when someone has a baby). The shop to which a Marine belongs will send the flowers.</li> <li>▪ <b>FRA gifts-</b> We did not give gifts to our FRA's, there was a recognition lunch given for them. <i>*FRO will take care of the Volunteer gifts and arranging the Volunteer recognition lunch/dinner</i></li> <li>▪ <b>Other:</b> (I didn't do the next four ideas below, they came from Linda Desens who was a CO Spouse of the 26<sup>th</sup> MEU)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>USMC No Bake Cookies (Easy &amp; Popular):</b> For thank you gifts or for another occasion, an inexpensive gift is to use the USMC candy molds and use round shortbread cookies or Keebler cookies. I use Ghiradelli chocolate for candy making (Sams Club sells the huge bars during the holiday). I wrap them nicely in a bow and include the USMC mold in a decorated bag with a nice note. You can also just wrap 2- 4 together in Wilton clear cookie/candy bags (located in the cake decorating section) and tie a bow around the top to match the season. A nice added touch is to attach a small note card by using a hole punch to place a hole in the corner of the card then attaching it to the bag with the ribbon.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>Within 2 months of command (Decide how you will deliver gift)</p> <p>Remember, if you give one gift to one spouse you MUST do it for all spouses who have babies. Consistency is the key here. So think about what you can sustain over the next two years and go with that. Remember you are responsible for paying for this out of your pocket, the money does not come out of the Family Readiness budget.</p>

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<p>Miscellaneous</p>	<p><a href="http://www.emarinetpx.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&amp;Store_Code=epx&amp;Product_Code=CK-863&amp;Category_Code=CRF">http://www.emarinetpx.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&amp;Store_Code=epx&amp;Product_Code=CK-863&amp;Category_Code=CRF</a></p> <p>2) <b>Unit recipe cards (Inexpensive &amp; Popular):</b> Use Microsoft Word to create custom recipe cards. Put your unit name and logo on it. You can further customize with aircraft, tanks, etc. Type out your favorite recipe. Laminate (can buy sheets in bulk from Samsclub or Costco). Put a set of cards together and tie with a bow. People still have their cards to this day that they received when we had our first command.</p> <p>3) <b>Framed 4x6 pictures:</b> I take a lot of pictures at family events - I sometimes frame a 4x6 of a family and give that to them as a gift. You can buy bulk picture frames from stores like Wal-Mart</p> <p>4) <b>USMC Notecards</b> (one w/ EGA or Aviator Wings): Order them in a pack of 20 then wrap them in packs of five with a ribbon around them as a gift. Order from Kathy - <a href="mailto:stampingkat@aol.com">stampingkat@aol.com</a></p>	<p>Google Drive and "takethemeal.com" are the easiest way to start a connection with your spouses and get them for example to sign up to take a meal. Be sure to coordinate with the FRO on this. <b>The FRO is the only person that can contact the family to actually see if they want a meal delivered or not. You cannot call the family out of the blue, the FRO must do it first.</b> The FRO should be driving this and in turn be coordination with the FRA's. If the FRO does not get involved after the phone call is made and the family does want meals delivered then you can step in and send out an email requesting volunteers to make a meal (but be sure to keep the FRO in the loop the entire time i.e. Cc. on all correspondence). Once you get the volunteers I</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use Google Drive to coordinate spouses and to store documents in a centralized location.</li> <li>▪ Meal sign-ups: <a href="http://www.takethemeal.com">www.takethemeal.com</a></li> <li>▪ Use Evite (<a href="http://www.evite.com">www.evite.com</a>) or Punchbowl (<a href="http://www.punchbowl.com">www.punchbowl.com</a>)</li> <li>▪ Check out OSC at your installation, and join!</li> <li>▪ Allow other spouses to take the lead on coordinating the social activities</li> <li>▪ Know who your MCCS Coordinator is. Your FRO should definitely know who this person is since they will help plan all of your unit or family day parties. They also most likely have connections with the other MCCS programs on base.</li> <li>▪ If you are having a big party, sometimes you can rent or even borrow serve ware from MCCS (e.g. chafing dishes and tablecloths).</li> <li>▪ If your commander will be a geo-bachelor, there are ways to connect with your families. Seek out other spouses that had this experience and see how they handled it. Please feel free to contact me for ideas and or other spouses who might have had this experience who could give you ideas.</li> <li>▪ Always have nametags for your parties (Have people use first and last names on them)</li> <li>▪ You'll meet so many people. They'll always remember who you are, but sometimes it's hard to remember everyone. When I greet folks and I'm not sure if we've met before, I usually say, "It's good to see you."</li> <li>▪ The greatest compliment you can give someone is to remember their name and know something about their family. Try to get an accurate roster with spouses and children's names. Chip and I usually do a quick review before an event.</li> <li>▪ Buy yourself some personalized Thank You Cards (the kind with your name or Monogram on it). You will be wanting to send thank you cards and it will be a nice touch if your name is on the front of them. Also purchase return labels as well, it really makes it much easier and less time consuming when having to write out the formal rank of your husband (really it's trying to remember the correct way to write it each time... hmm should I abbreviate his rank or write it out lol).</li> </ul>	<p>Use Google Drive to coordinate spouses and to store documents in a centralized location.</p> <p>Meal sign-ups: <a href="http://www.takethemeal.com">www.takethemeal.com</a></p> <p>Use Evite (<a href="http://www.evite.com">www.evite.com</a>) or Punchbowl (<a href="http://www.punchbowl.com">www.punchbowl.com</a>)</p> <p>Check out OSC at your installation, and join!</p> <p>Allow other spouses to take the lead on coordinating the social activities</p> <p>Know who your MCCS Coordinator is. Your FRO should definitely know who this person is since they will help plan all of your unit or family day parties. They also most likely have connections with the other MCCS programs on base.</p> <p>If you are having a big party, sometimes you can rent or even borrow serve ware from MCCS (e.g. chafing dishes and tablecloths).</p> <p>If your commander will be a geo-bachelor, there are ways to connect with your families. Seek out other spouses that had this experience and see how they handled it. Please feel free to contact me for ideas and or other spouses who might have had this experience who could give you ideas.</p> <p>Always have nametags for your parties (Have people use first and last names on them)</p> <p>You'll meet so many people. They'll always remember who you are, but sometimes it's hard to remember everyone. When I greet folks and I'm not sure if we've met before, I usually say, "It's good to see you."</p> <p>The greatest compliment you can give someone is to remember their name and know something about their family. Try to get an accurate roster with spouses and children's names. Chip and I usually do a quick review before an event.</p> <p>Buy yourself some personalized Thank You Cards (the kind with your name or Monogram on it). You will be wanting to send thank you cards and it will be a nice touch if your name is on the front of them. Also purchase return labels as well, it really makes it much easier and less time consuming when having to write out the formal rank of your husband (really it's trying to remember the correct way to write it each time... hmm should I abbreviate his rank or write it out lol).</p>	

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	<p>then send them the link to one of these sites to sign up for a day and what they plan to make. This is a super easy way to coordinate meals.</p> <p>Evite and Pucnbow! are easy ways to send out invitation. It allows you to track responses.</p>
<p>Recipes/Menus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You don't have to make everything from scratch. Whenever possible, use pre-prepared foods from Costco and Sams Club, especially for things like dips, appetizers, and desserts.</li> <li>▪ Some of my top recipe choices include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>Chicken Marabella</u>: You can marinate this ahead of time, then on the day of your party, dump the chicken in pans and bake. If you only have 1 oven, you can bake 2 pans at a time then put the pans in a cooler to keep hot until your party. This is great for a large party.</li> <li>○ This made Southern Livings top recipes cookbook.</li> <li>○ <u>Thunder Chicken Pot Pie</u>: This is great to make for meals to take to other people. I've received rave reviews on this one. You can make this ahead and freeze. To make it super-fast and easy, I buy ready-made chicken from Costco or SamsClub (You can also use rotisserie chicken), and then I use ready-made piecrust.</li> <li>○ <u>Hawaaian Bread</u>. This is great to use for a coffee or to give as a gift (wrap in cellophane and a bow). One recipe makes 2 breads. It's quick to make and delicious</li> <li>○ <u>Anna's Ham Buns</u>: This is an all-time favorite! You can make a day ahead. Great appetizer!</li> <li>○ <u>Pecan Bars</u>: These are one of my all-time favorites! Use these for a coffee or give them on a nice plate as gifts.</li> <li>○ <u>Jambalaya Bake</u>: This is great for a crowd and super easy! My 1stLt son loves to make this because it is so easy. Serve it with a salad and some cornbread - yum!</li> <li>○ <u>Gail's 5 hour beef stew</u>: Throw it all together, put it in the oven, and let it go. It is flavorful and the meat turns out tender. Great for a crowd. Good comfort food for the Fall.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <u>After Action Report</u>: Tina Sturdevant shared this idea with Linda Desens who then shared it with me (see what you can gain from the Spouses Workshop!). She lists everything she is serving for her party to include the drinks; she also tracks the amount and how much is eaten. That way, she'll know which foods/drinks are popular and how much to make or not make for the next party.</li> <li>▪ <u>The 5-B Party - Burgers, Bratwurts, Baked Beans, Brownies &amp; Beer</u>. Super easy! No recipes required</li> </ul>

*\*This is an unofficial document. The ideas and links provided are not endorsed by the Marine Corps or DoD*

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