



January 28, 2011

Celebrating 25 Years!!



Sergeant Elias Rick Munoz, FCO 52nd IN; 4/2 SBCT, US ARMY

1. When did you participate in the Corps and for how long?

I had just turned 18 when I joined, so I think it was around 1998. I was a corpsmember for 2 years, one of which I spent in Wyoming with the N.O.L.S (National Outdoor Leadership School). I was on the Tree Crew, and out of all the projects that I participated in, the Cool Schools program probably had the biggest impact on me. In Cool Schools we worked to make schools more energy efficient through construction and planting shade trees. The part that I got the most out of, was talking to kids about protecting the environment and motivating them to begin caring for the planet and preparing for their future.

2. Please tell us about your life now, both professionally and personally.

Professionally, I have just completed 10 years of service in the army. Over the course of my career, I've been promoted from E-1 private to Sergeant 1st Class (in order to get to this rank you must be promoted *seven* times). I'm planning to do the full twenty years and retire with the Army. I serve as an Infantryman, and have been on two combat deployments. I participated in a Kosovo peacekeeping mission in 2000 and I participated in the initial invasion to Iraq in '03. In fact, I just returned from a 09 – 10 deployment from Baghdad, Iraq with 4-2 SBCT (Stryker Brigade Combat Team). I am currently assigned to FCO 52d IN; 4-2 SBCT here at Ft. Lewis, WA.

I have 2 kids now, Daniel (5 yrs) and Destiny (11 yrs). I've been married to my wife, Celeste, for 8 years now. My family lives with me at Fort Lewis, WA. Aside from work, I don't do much. I just spend as much time as I can with my family – you know, going to movies, bowling, whatever. I take my kids everywhere.

3. How did the Corps influence who you are and what you are doing currently?

The Corps saved my life -- if they hadn't accepted me I would be dead or in jail as a result of my environment. If it wasn't for people I met in the Corps like Dan Knapp – who I consider a mentor, and who I still really look up to today – and Noel, I'm not sure where I would be. The Corps gave me basic but crucial skills that you would think everyone would have – things like showing up for work on time, being responsible and having the courage to continue school. Because of some of the things I grew up with, these just weren't a part of my life until I came to the Corps.

It allowed me to beat that fear of the unknown that I had created for myself – the fear of everything outside of my neighborhood and what I was used to. It was what first showed me that things didn't have to be the way that they were! That's what inspired me to take that step to join the Army. When I first became a corpsmember I definitely did not have my priorities straight. But they really care for you, and believe in you far more than you're even capable of believing in yourself! When it felt like time was running out for me, Dan Knapp suggested that I join the military. 10 years later I'm still in the service and am alive and happy. The Corps helped me earn my GED which allowed me to get in the Army in the 1st place, but it also gave me the responsibility and discipline that I need to succeed and lead while here. The Corps is kind of like a little boot camp where all the little exercises help build your work ethic and discipline – running that mile every morning before work, for instance – can end up being put to work later in life and help to mold you into a better & stronger person.

4. Is there anything particularly memorable about the Corps that you would like to share?

The biggest thing for me was getting over the fear of the unknown. So my advice is: "Be open minded and have the courage to face adversity and accept challenges."

Young Adult Corps

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps Network completed 80 hours of Solar Installation training at NELA with an actual installation in Compton with Grid Alternatives on Monday and Tuesday. The Corpsmembers from LA Corps and San Gabriel Valley Corps worked together to install a 2.6 kw photovoltaic at a low-income home in Compton, the resident was very impressed by the finished product.



Shows LACCN Corpsmembers training to install a photovoltaic system at the NELA solar lab.



Shows LACCN Corpsmembers, Supervisors and installers from Grid Alternatives at the installation in Compton.

Work continues on the Elysian Valley Bike Path. Corpsmembers completed installation of the outdoor exercise equipment and application of the mow strip as well as installation of a decomposed granite base around the equipment. Corpsmembers learned how to form a concrete mow strip, properly learn to pour cement, install and tie rebar as well as finish cement. Richard Santillano especially saved the day when our foreman, Frank Vuoso, was pulled to work on another project. Richard had received training from general contractor, Petersen Chase Construction, on cement finishing while working on a project to repair storm drain grates. Using the skills he learned, Richard led the crew in the cement finishing and completed the job. We received help from our Water Efficiency Crew out of our NELA site. They helped tremendously by assisting us in the installation of 60 spray heads and approximately 300 feet of lateral lines, in addition to helping grade and level our work site. A special thanks to Nora Bustamante and Gerald Fletcher.



Sallahudean Payne completes forms

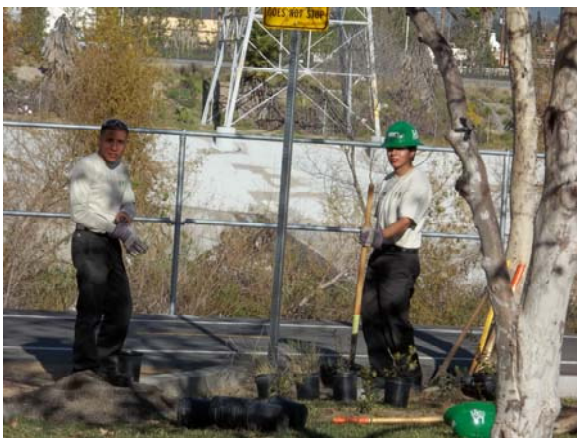


ODE (Outdoor Exercise Equipment) Complete

This week the new Water Efficiency Job Training Crew helped out with a project at Marsh Street Park installing irrigation and planting low water usage plants. Corpsmembers have been learning about the importance of conserving water to preserve our natural ecosystem and now they are getting hands-on training in the field.



This is the irrigation that the crew has installed



Corpsmembers Eric Caltempa and Omar Castro have stopped planting to pose for a picture.



Corpsmember Andres Solorio digging a hole.

On Saturday, January 22nd, The Corps and Peace Corps collaborated on an MLK Service Project to improve Bell Gardens Park by planting 30 15-gallon Sycamore Trees. Thank you to the 65 volunteers from Peace Corps, Americorps, Upward Bound from Victor Valley College and Jeff Davis along with Crew 25A – Omar Cosina, Jose Padilla, Alicia Johnson, Katrice Johnson and Jeffrey Scott.