

Miramar Community Leaders Forum
July 16, 2009

This month, the usual meeting format was replaced by a demonstration of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, or MCMAP.

It is no secret that Marines are pretty fierce warriors. Everyone knows that Marines are highly trained in various modes of combat, including hand-to-hand combat. But before this demonstration, I was unaware that the Marines, all Marines (and that includes the women) are trained in the martial arts.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) is a progressive system starting in the “Boot Camps” of Parris Island and San Diego with each successive level improving on and enhancing skills learned in the previous level. Marines will continue to advance through the program throughout their careers, eventually reaching the top of the program as a “Black Belt.”

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program consists of three components; mental discipline, character discipline and physical discipline. All three of these disciplines are included in each belt level.

Mental discipline is involved with the study of the art of war, professional reading, decision-making training, and risk management assessment. Force protection is studied, along with the study of Marine Corps history, customs, courtesies and traditions. The mental discipline creates a smarter Marine, capable of understanding and handling the complexity of modern warfare. The Marine Corps wants men and women who can make the right decision, whether in combat or at a party.

Character Discipline has two main components: The Marine Corps Core Values Program and the Marine Corps Leadership Program. The components of character discipline instill in every Marine the warrior spirit and emphasize developing esprit de corps, camaraderie and a warrior mindset.

Physical Discipline consists of three main components; fighting techniques combat conditioning and combat sports. The various armed and unarmed combat techniques are combined as part of the Marine Corps Physical Fitness Program to produce the combat conditioning component.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program consists of a belt ranking system with 5 basic levels – tan, gray, green, brown, and black belt. The colored belt levels are identified as “user” levels. The black belt has 6 levels of its own and is attained by senior personnel and instructors.

The tan belt is conducted at entry-level training as part of the transformation process from civilian to Marine. Recruits learn basic techniques and acquire a basic understanding of Marine Corps leadership and core values concepts.

Gray belt encompasses follow-on training after entry level. Basics are reinforced and Marines are introduced to intermediate techniques.

Green belt is a skill level for the noncommissioned officer. Here development of intermediate level skills is continued and Leadership and core values development training is emphasized. Green belt holders are qualified to attend the instructor trainer course and become instructors.

Brown belt continues intermediate techniques and begins work on advanced techniques. Marines with a brown belt develop the ability to teach leadership and core values.

Black belt Marines are serious students of the Martial Arts. Advanced skills training begin in earnest. Black belt Marines can become Instructor Trainers – that may be thought of as the instructor to the instructors.

The end state of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is to develop a professional Marine who is an arms carrying combatant who cannot only fight, but understands the moral dimensions of conflict, makes ethical decisions in an situation, and uphold the image and high moral fiber of a Marine.

In my mind, this program is really amazing. The program teaches these Marines to be fierce fighters, of course, but it also teaches ethics, character and leadership. Just because a Marine may have the physical skills to overpower an enemy, he or she must also have the character and discipline to choose the appropriate time and degree of use of force, or decide whether force is even needed and to what degree.

Our young Marines are not just tough; they have a great deal of character and integrity.

By the way, don't mess with those female Marines. They take Martial Arts VERY seriously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C Frederick