

Morning Calm

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Signal Battalion birthday bash Even higher savings revealed



36th Signal Battalion

July 1, the 36th Signal Battalion celebrated its 36th birthday on the peninsula. More than 60 Soldiers and Civilians were on-hand to celebrate the meaningful occasion. Prior to cutting the birthday cake, everyone joined in to sing a charming rendition of, "Happy Birthday, To You" after which, from left to right, Lt. Col. Mark Rosenstein, the battalion commander, Pfc. Roberto Leal, the battalion's youngest Soldier, and Command Sgt. Maj. Harry Mercado, the battalion command sergeant major, cut the symbolic cake. — *Courtesy photo*

By Kay Blakley
DeCA Office of Communication

FORT LEE, Va. — Could you use an extra \$369 a month in your pocket? Here's how — shop your commissary! "Delivering substantial savings to the brave men and women of our armed forces is now, and always has been, our top priority," said Acting DeCA Director and COO Thomas E. Milks. "Recent changes in the way savings levels are computed have shown the actual dollar value of the commissary benefit is even higher than previously reported. That is excellent news!"

Savings rates have traditionally been based on comparisons between commissary sales figures and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's moderate-cost food plan statistics, which is a continuous survey measuring household grocery store purchases. The USDA figures are based on food purchases only, while the commissary data included both food and nonfood items. The food savings percentage is based on savings for the following edible categories: grocery (food), dairy, frozen food, meat and produce. The non-food savings percentage is based on savings for health and beauty care items along with grocery (non-food) which includes pet products, cleaning and laundry, paper products and other household items.

"This year, for the first time, we have broken out the nonfood items, so we're comparing apples to apples, so to speak," said Greg Kochuba, special projects chief for DeCA's sales directorate. "It's a more valid comparison of commissary prices vs. retail grocery prices and should be a more meaningful tool for our shoppers."

The overall savings percentage reported



earlier this year remains at 31.7 percent. However, worldwide savings for the food-only category now stands at 32 percent, and for the nonfood category at 30.5 percent. "Translating the percentages into dollar savings is where the difference really shows," Kochuba said. Savings for a typical family of four increased from almost \$3,300 per year to more than \$4,400 per year when you include savings on nonfood items.

"That's a \$369 a month boost to the family budget. So now, more than ever, our customers can see that shopping the commissary really is worth the trip!" Milks said.

The bullets below list the combined annual savings amounts with household sizes indicated.

- Single — \$1,530.26
- Married — \$2,805.46
- Family of three — \$3,461.59
- Family of four — \$4,428.24
- Family of five — \$4,915.82
- Family of six — \$5,990.74
- Family of seven — \$6,347.12

The Commissary... It's Worth the Trip!