

## Military Fitness and Wellness

# PACAF Fitness Gears Up to Meet New Mission

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**F**or the past year Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Fitness Centers have been gearing up to meet their new mission. According to Julie A. Fetters, chief, Fitness and Sports Branch, headquarters, PACAF/A1SCF, the Air

Force Fitness and Sports mission is changing, taking on a two-tiered mission. "The primary mission is to support the unit commander's fitness program, be an advisor/liaison to unit Physical Training Leaders (PTLs), support the Fitness Improvement Program (FIP) and provide on-site, interactive customer service with equipment and facility orientations. The secondary mission is to provide core fitness and sports programs to all authorized users."

One of the new requirements for Air Force Fitness Center staff is to offer fitness assessments to every first-term airman and other customers as time and resources allow. "In lieu of this, PACAF took the lead and purchased MicroFit systems for those PACAF bases that needed them," says Fetters. "The MicroFit system is an excellent tool that provides quick and accurate data and will reduce an assessment session by more than 50 percent, which is critical with current manpower shortfalls."

Last year, PACAF hosted an assessment training session via satellite with all PACAF fitness center staff. "Rob Rideout, MicroFit guru, conducted a hands-on training session with fitness center staff members to ensure they received the latest training," says Fetters.

### Fit to Fight

With such a big push on health promotion and prevention in the Marine Corps and throughout the military, fitness assessments play an integral role in getting people on the road to wellness.

"The assessments provide a road map for where a person is and where they could be," says Dawn Pierce, fitness center director at Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Once a person comes in to do an assessment, Pierce and other staff members work with him/her to create an exercise prescription. "We tailor the exercise prescription to meet their specific needs and goals, and then we show them what they need to do to reach those goals."

Pierce and her staff then literally walk people through a full orientation on all of the fitness equipment, show them

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF HICKAM AFB, HAWAII.

The fitness center at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, provides a wide array of cardio and strength equipment, as well as top-notch fitness, wellness and health promotion programs.

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how to set it up and use it, focusing on proper form and technique. “We want to take away the fear or intimidation factor that can stop someone from taking that next step and coming into the fitness center to work out.”

Pierce explains that Hickam staff performs a six-week follow-up for everyone who has done an initial assessment to see where the person is, how far they have come and where they need to go to reach their goals.

“The key is to accentuate the positive while showing them the areas that they still need to work on,” she explains.

The fitness center has a dedicated “assessment room,” which houses the MicroFit, as well as fitness equipment such as dumbbells, medicine balls, stationary bikes, tubes and fit balls. “The room really allows us to take the stigma out of coming to the gym, and provides a great one-on-one environment.”

### Strength in Diversity

As fitness center director of a very busy facility that averages 1,500 visitors daily — closer to 2,000 when it rains — Pierce takes all of this responsibility in stride. In addition to making sure the fitness center is running smoothly, she oversees all programs, events and activities for a diverse audience that includes servicemembers from all branches, family members, reservists, national guardsman, civilian and Department of Defense (DoD) contractors and retirees.

“We have a diverse audience and we are in such a great location that we are able to count on outside activities and facilities to bolster what we do in the fitness center,” says Pierce.

Inside, the fitness center is well equipped with a wide variety of cardio equipment, including Life Fitness, Star Trac, Precor, Nautilus and Cybex, as well as top-notch strength equipment from Hammer Strength, Paramount, Icarian, Body Masters, Nautilus, Cybex and Iron Grip.

The facility also houses basketball courts, an aerobics



room, massage therapy and a spinning center with 33 Star Trac bikes.

Pierce says that the base works closely with the Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) as part of a comprehensive approach to fitness and wellness at Hickam AFB.

“It really is a synergistic relationship between fitness and wellness, and we are able to work with dieticians and physicians to provide total support for this diverse community that we work with.”

The Marine Corps’ focus on health and wellness over the past 10 years has made it a leader in health promotion, and Hickam is no different. In addition to all of the great programs that Marine Corps HAWCs provide — smoking cessation, nutrition, pregnancy health, to name just a few — Hickam has added a new class called Sensible Eating and Exercise Lifestyle Freedom.

“We want people to make a big commitment when they sign up for the course, which is why we made it eight weeks,” says Pierce. “We are fortunate to have such a strong focus here on health promotion and prevention.”

Because of the unique locale on a beautiful Hawaiian island, many people on base get out and get active in the great outdoors, which is a wonderful complement to the fitness center.

“We have a great variety of equipment, but not nearly enough space for the community we serve,” Pierce explains. “So having

the ability to plan a lot of outdoor activities and special events as an extension of what we do here at the fitness center aids us in the ultimate goal of getting people exercising and living healthy lives.”

Another great tool used at the fitness center, from airmen and wing commanders to civilians





and retirees, is FitLinxx — interactive, computerized fitness technology that is attached to the fitness equipment. The system tracks workouts, provides comprehensive comparative data and numbers, and motivates exercisers. The system has been very successful in helping airmen who have scored in the marginal category on their physical readiness test to push and motivate themselves to succeed and score much higher on their subsequent tests. The system also lets PACAF leaders and commanders look at how each base is doing, or look at total participation across PACAF.

In addition to the fitness center, special events and activities, Hickam sports programs are hugely successful, mainly because “we have a captive audience here on the island,” says Pierce.

As part of the Air Force’s push to get its youth more active, the base is very involved in the Air Force-wide Fit Factor program, which provides youths, ages 6-18, the opportunity to join in an incentive-based fitness and wellness program that is tracked online. The Air Force is able to analyze numbers it has compiled over the past few years, track participation levels, top bases, etc. The pro-

gram has had success throughout the Air Force, including Hickam.

“We are very involved with our youth and families,” says Pierce. “and work with them to provide the best support possible, from programs and facilities to activities and events.”

Even with all of this cutting-edge fitness equipment, technology and programs, the facility would not be what it is if not for the staff, who are all highly trained and experienced. All have taken and completed the Air Force Fitness Specialist Course, and many have numerous certifications and advanced degrees.

“We work very closely with the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA) and The Cooper Institute to keep our staff up to date with their training and certifications,” says Pierce.

“We also encourage advanced training and certification, allowing our staff members to branch out and bring in their new talents and expertise. They have a lot of pride in how they run their classes and training, and it shows in the success of our programs and classes.”

Pierce says the other key to success is the teamwork that goes on between all staff members. “We all work side-by-side, the HAWC and the fitness center, toward the same goals.”

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