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NMMC Opens Children's Gallery

On Saturday from noon to 2 pm, the National Museum of the Marine Corps opens its new Children's Gallery, a space that proves that history isn't just for the classroom or grownups; it's also fun and engaging for the youngest visitors.

During this two-hour celebration, visitors and their young children will explore the new gallery with timed entry tickets (read more below), take silly photographs in a photo booth, get their faces painted with camouflage paint, and watch Lisa, the "Juggling Unicycle Gal" ride around Leatherneck Gallery on various sizes of unicycles and mini bikes while providing comedy, juggling, and magic. Visitors can also get a caricature drawn, watch a puppet show, play with a floor-full of LEGOs, participate in activities for children under 5, play carnival games, and meet "Chesty" the museum mascot! Partners of the museum will also be on hand to give out information, including: United Through Reading, FOCUS, Semper Fit, and LINKS. Children can also pair up to read stories to therapy dogs with Tales with Tails: Reading to Therapy Dogs, where young readers can pair up with a therapy dog and read a story! Each young visitor will receive a limited edition wooden coin to commemorate their attendance.

The Children's Gallery mimics the Museum's theme of U.S. and world history as seen through the eyes of Marines but scaled down to kid size with hands-on interactive exhibits. Children are immersed in Marine Corps history, starting with the Corps' birth at Tun Tavern in 1775 and traveling all the way to today's Marine Corps.

"Most people think of the Museum as appropriate for a more mature audience, but we're also a great place for children to discover Marine Corps history in an environment where they can still be a kid," Laura Hockensmith, NMMC Education Chief, said. "This is a space where families can engage in the Corps' history in a fun way."

In each of the time periods represented children "meet" illustrated Marine "guides" through letters, postcards, and interactives that help young visitors understand what it's like to serve both at home and abroad. Children will learn about the Colonial period through objects on the porch of Tun Tavern, the legendary birthplace of the Corps; walk through a WWI trench and look into "no man's land" through periscopes. The child-sized WWII era landing craft showcases the importance of the Corps' amphibious capabilities. The landing craft's moving pistons and the scaled down Korean War era helicopter's

working controls keep children engaged and learning. Young visitors also try on modern uniforms and get a glimpse into how today's warriors use technology to stay in touch with their loved ones.

The experience is designed for children up to 10 years old, but all visitors are welcome. Museum educators will be on duty, and there is ample seating for parents, caregivers, and story time.

On Saturday, each child interested in visiting the new Gallery will receive a timed entry sticker at the entrance of the museum. Since a large attendance is anticipated for the grand opening, each timed entry is valid for 15 minutes of play in the gallery. The Museum cannot guarantee entry to all families on Saturday although will remain open until the museum closes at 1700. Timed entry tickets will only be used the first day. Regular entry to the Children's Gallery will begin on Sunday and the gallery will be open every day except Christmas, just like the Museum's hours.

"Marines are intensely proud of what they do and anxious to share their story with their children and grandchildren. This Children's Gallery is the perfect complement to our historical galleries and a great way to share the Corps' story with the future leaders of this great nation," NMMC Director Lin Ezell said.

The National Museum of the Marine Corps is located at 18900 Jefferson Davis Highway in Triangle, Virginia and is open 9:00 am –5:00 pm daily except Christmas Day. Admission and parking are free. For more information, please call 703 784-6107 or visit the Museum's website at www.usmcmuseum.com.

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