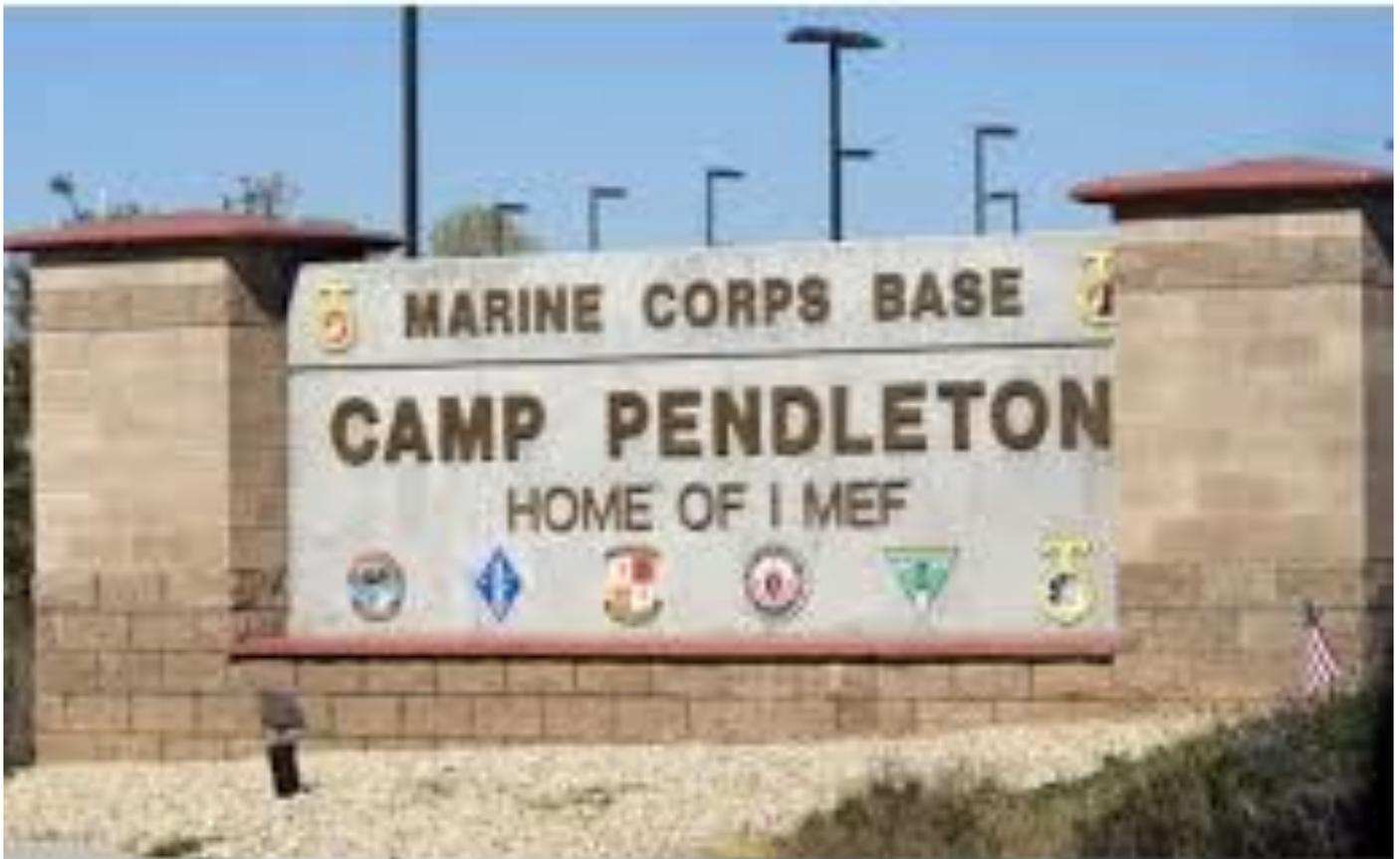




Camp Pendleton Armed Services YMCA

Our Mission and History



Our History

The YMCA Movement began in England in 1844; and was transplanted to this country in 1859 at Boston, Massachusetts. The real beginning of extensive service to the military did not begin until April, 1861 during the Civil War when YMCA members voluntarily provided helpful services to the soldiers on the battlefield or relief to prisoners-of-war. The YMCA's peacetime charter to serve military personnel was formally endorsed by the US Government in 1902 with the construction of facilities on many installations for recreational, sports and counselling serviced for service members. During World War I, the YMCA developed a massive program of morale and welfare support for the military both at home and overseas.

To effectively manage the need for a large volunteer effort for World War II, the YMCA joined five other voluntary agencies in February 1941 to form the United Services Organization for National Defense or USO. The YMCA operated 25% of the USO centers in the United States. The YMCA's War Prisoners Aid Program undertook a massive humanitarian service similar to what it had accomplished in World War I. Lasting more than seven years, the program cost \$15,000,000 and was involved with



POW camps in 33 countries. As the USO was deactivated in 1948, the YMCA changed its name to YMCA Armed Services and continued to provide social services to the Armed Forces. In 1951 the USO was reactivated to support the Korean and Vietnam conflicts and the YMCA became the USO's major independent operating agency.

By 1977, the YMCA National Board of Directors determined the work of the USO had been successfully completed and the YMCA needed to resume delivering its unique services directly to the military within its own organizational structure. With this decision, the USO requested, and the YMCA accepted responsibility of the 12 USO centers in the United States. Following an organizational review in 1984, the YMCA's Armed Services Department became the Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) of the USA and executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Defense attesting to the relevancy of ASYMCA programs and services to the Armed Forces.

During World War II, the YMCA opened a new operation in downtown Oceanside in January, 1943. By June, the operation moved into a permanent facility and changed its name to the Armed Services YMCA. Providing dancing and movies, the holidays were observed with special meals, and summer activities included beach parties and cookouts.

In 1967, the center was renamed the North County Armed Services YMCA and opened its first family center in one of Camp Pendleton's housing areas. Changes in the military resulted in a decreasing need for a downtown recreation center and an increasing need for children and family out-reach services. By 1994, the ASYMCA was operating family centers in three housing areas and broadened its programs to kindergarten readiness classes and parenting education.

In 1995, the ASYMCA was awarded a contract to provide before and after school care for school age military children; and developed a tutoring and counselling program for at-risk military students called Operation Hero. Eventually, Operation Hero was adopted nationally and is operating in all branches. In 1997, the Base invited the North County ASYMCA to relocate aboard Camp Pendleton. With the move, the organization changed its name to the Camp Pendleton Armed Services YMCA to clarify our specific mission and target population of 36,000 active duty military personnel and 18,000 dependent family members.

Our Mission

The Armed Services YMCA enhances the lives of military members and their families in spirit, mind and body through programs relevant to the unique challenges of military life.