

The 47th CSH Nutrition Care Magicians: Morale is our Mission

By CPT Hillary Harper

Between 12 and 18 February 2002, 28 soldiers assigned to the 47th Combat Support Hospital Nutrition Care Section joined up at Fort Lewis. These 91M and 65C came from 11 different units across the AMEDD. There was less than one month to train together as a unit and a section before deploying to Kuwait on 8 March 2002.

As soon as the unit touched down in Camp Wolf, Kuwait, the work began. Almost all of a 296-bed hospital had to be set up, and quickly. The 47th CSH would become the largest hospital in theatre, treating the majority of casualties. Since there was a contract dining facility, the Nutrition Care Section had to fight for the resources needed to set up and maintain field feeding. The section overcame these logistical problems to become operational ahead of schedule.

Starting at 0500 hours and continuing throughout the day and night, SFC Llewellyn and SFC Walsh and their Nutrition Care crew worked to boost morale of the 47th CSH. Although food service in the desert brings with it a fair number of challenges, such as limited rations and 120°F temperatures, the section gets creative to make everything from spicy soups to decorated double-layered chocolate cake.

The more limited the resource, the more creativity abounds. At first, several items had to be constructed to enhance operations. SSG Laws, SSG Bizzell, and SGT Dreher along with several assistants, constructed tables, benches, shelves, and even a staircase to access the ration refrigerator. SGT Ballares continually awed us with his artistic creations that range from the educational and safety oriented to just plain humorous. It was not unusual to find a metal tray filled with sand and colored rocks labeled Ft. Irwin, adorning the end of the serving line (just SSG Covey and SSG Dickerson's attempt to create reminders of some of the posts back home).

Getting more rations from salad dressing to meats for a unit barbecue required quite a scavenger hunt. Thanks to SSG Adams and several others, the section had enough grills and food to serve nearly 600 staff, patients, and a few honorable guests. The section has also put on 2 special steak and seafood meals and a pizza night. The staff welcomed the occasional hot and spicy item, advertised when SGT Baca was working. The surprises continued with SG T Sapp and SPC Estrada working hard to prepare familiar, cool and tasty items such as watermelon fruit baskets and relish trays.

As time went on, the rations available improved and the section was able to offer sports drinks, all kinds of fresh produce, deli meats, and some familiar convenience items such as chicken cordon bleu.

One of the best places to be after 2100 hours is in Nutrition Care to try the latest soup or dessert concoction. SSG Newman started this trend with her elaborate fruit trays and oh-

so-tasty soups, and the section was stormed with questions of “who is making that soup?” and “no wonder the night shift doesn’t want to switch shifts.” Patients and staff alike enjoyed stopping by SSG Law’s and PFC Scutt’s “Up All Night Café” for theme based music and some “CPR Soup” (that’s chicken, peas, and rice) or Strawberry Banana Love Handles for dessert.

Nutrition Care still found time for fun such as reaching the finals in the unit volleyball tournament and visiting the Kuwaiti Naval Base for relaxation and swimming. The section also had a team put on an impressive showing in the Desert Warrior Challenge. This team included SSG Kay, SSG Newman, SGT Dreher, SSG Dickerson, and PFC Cunningham.

Patients and visitors to the 47th CSH Kuwaiti Café, found the food top-notch and the service with a smile. It is amazing what the 91M can do for patients and staff when the rations and equipment are available.