Corporal Ben Magiera: What I've been told ever since I came into the Marine Corps and had postal chores as MOI is that mail is morale, and when it comes to mail it’s just something that's going to motivate you. It keeps the troops around the frontlines fighting, that will to fight, and it makes it so that when you get that Christmas present or that letter from your wife saying that she just had your first baby, it keeps you being able to go through those seven months without having to worry about what's going on back home. We’re kind of that in-between person that bridges that gap between back home in the States and being deployed here.

Personally, my favorite thing about this job is when you get that package for that master sergeant who’s been waiting to find out whether his baby has been born, to actually get to know them on a personal basis. We get to know many of the Marines on this camp. We’re known by face as the postal Marines. So to be able to say, hey, master sergeant, I have that box you’ve been waiting for. And just to see his eyes light up, he just gets really excited just to know that his box finally got in. It’s really rewarding to know that we're actually doing something that makes people happy.

My family is entirely from San Diego. I was born in Grossmont. We pretty much lived in Alpine, and then we moved to Pine Valley. So we've grown up in the San Diego area. I've been there my whole life. Two brothers, two sisters, we all grew up there. It’s probably one of the finest places to grow up.
Every New Year we get together as a family. We have a thankful box. It was something that we used to do during Thanksgiving but moved it to New Year just because it was a time where more of us could be around. Each of us takes on a little piece of note paper and put it inside the tissue box and something that we’re thankful for. Throughout the entire month of December, we put a little thing here, there, and on New Year’s Eve we actually grab all the little notes out and sit in the family corner and just read everything that’s there. We get some really funny things like sometimes we have being thankful for pickle juice, as to being thankful that we’re all here and safe.

If you wait until Christmas or New Year as a point to get through the deployment, you’re going to think of all those traditions and happy things that you do back home. One of the things my corps did when I was at book back in Iraq was we didn’t have ice cream until Christmas, and in the entire time, that’s where we’re focusing on. We’re counting down the days until Christmas so we could have ice cream. It took my focus off of the actual Christmas holiday season which could make me homesick but to be focused more on something like ice cream, which is a lot of fun. It gets the unit together, something that everyone can look forward to, see if you can get anybody to join and jump in on the bandwagon.

This holiday season, I’m actually going to go and do a fun run that all the units are putting together. It’s going on at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve. We’re going to get together, do a 5k fun run. It’s going to be really, really cold but it’s going to be something that we can do together as a group to get our blood pumping. It’s going to be a lot of fun.