

Young Marines plan fundraiser to for work with local veterans - San Antonio Express-News

"It teaches them how to say 'no' to someone who might push drugs on them," said **David Pedraza**, Mercedes' and Jonathan's father. "They advocate that a lot to the other kids at school."

Young Marines are also encouraged to live a drug-free lifestyle as an appendage of the U.S. Marines. The program also places an emphasis on community service and encourages the youths to take part in military events and support programs that work with wounded warriors.

The San Antonio unit of 64 area Young Marines ages 8-18 will be hosting a barbecue fundraiser July 27 to raise money for the unit's community project, Ramps for Warriors, building wheelchair ramps for wounded veterans in the area.

"The kids get a sense of pride in the day and age of the 'me' generation and a sense of giving," Salas said.

The barbecue fundraiser will include a live band and contests will help raise money for the ramps project and others.

"It's a great opportunity to support the kids and an organization that teaches them about leadership and giving back," event coordinator **Brett Walker** said. "It's not about what kind of trips these kids get to go on (from fundraising). It's about what they can do to help by doing it."

Salas said he hopes to raise more than last year's total of \$1,300 for his unit so they can continue to instill military values through community service that will last a lifetime.

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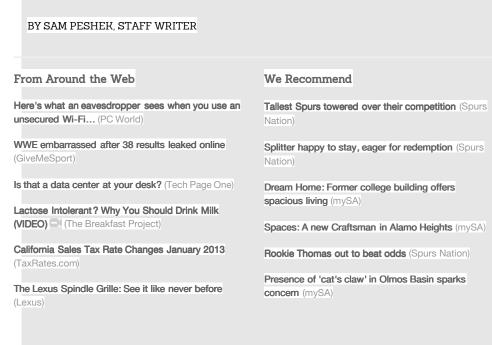
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"Once a Young Marine, always a Young Marine," Salas said.

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