

Chapter 5 – Healthy, Drug-Free Lifestyle (HDL)

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EO.1 – Explain the Young Marines' Stance on a Healthy, Drug-Free Lifestyle

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A key pillar of the Young Marines program is our determination to live a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. Not only do we believe this is important for all of our Adult Volunteers, Young Marines, and parents, but we believe this is important for everyone. Because of this, an important part of living a healthy, drug-free lifestyle is sharing information about drug use and prevention with our friends, peers, and community members. We do this in the hopes of reducing the demand for drugs in our schools, communities, states, and the country. To help spread our drug-free message, the Young Marines have two key programs we participate in: **Red Ribbon Week** and our **Red Cord Initiative**.

Red Ribbon Week

Red Ribbon Week occurs every year the week of October 23-31 when people all over the country wear red ribbons to spread awareness of the dangers of drug use. The official name of Red Ribbon Week is the National Red Ribbon Campaign, and it was started by the National Family Partnership, or NFP. The NFP began the campaign after the death of DEA Special Agent Enrique "KiKi" Camarena, who was killed in Mexico in 1985.

KiKi Camarena was a United States Marine who joined the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) in 1974. He was transferred to Mexico in 1977 where he remained on the trail of some of the country's biggest drug traffickers. He was close to unlocking a multi-billion dollar drug pipeline when he was kidnapped on February 7, 1985. He was found dead on March 5, 1985. During his eleven years with the DEA, Kiki received two Sustained Superior Performance Awards, a Special Achievement Award, and, after his death, the Administrator's Award of Honor which is the highest award given by the DEA.

After his death, Congressman Duncan Hunter and Kiki's friend Henry Lozano launched the Camarena Club in California whose members wore red ribbons and pledged to lead drug-free lives to honor Kiki's memory and sacrifice. In 1985 members of the club presented the "Camarena Club Proclamation" to the First Lady at the time, Nancy Reagan. Parents all over the country began to form their own clubs, or coalitions, to spread awareness of the dangers of drugs. Each coalition also wore red ribbons in Kiki's memory. Once the club had national attention, the National Family Partnership began the first ever Red Ribbon Campaign in 1988 with President and Mrs. Reagan serving as chairpersons.

Every year we continue to celebrate Red Ribbon Week as a program to spread awareness for the dangers of drugs to ourselves and our communities. We do this through community events, the DDR Dash 5k, wearing red ribbons in October, and our red cords throughout the year.

Red Cord Initiative

The Young Marines units have participated in Red Ribbon Week, October 23-31, for over a decade and wanted to do more to share our commitment to a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. At our 2016 Adult Leaders Conference, the adult volunteers of our program created the red cord initiative.

Our red cords are made of red 550 paracord. The color red represents the red ribbons used by the Camarena Club to remember and honor Enrique “Kiki” Camarena who gave his life fighting against drugs and drug-trafficking with the DEA. The 550 paracord shows our connection to the military and our core values of leadership, teamwork, and discipline. We use the red paracord to make bracelets we can wear all the time, not just during Red Ribbon Week. Wearing our red cords year-round shows we are always committed to be healthy and drug-free and to educating our peers and communities on why they should pledge to be drug-free too.

To find out how to make your own red cord, check out the video on our Young Marines website: <https://youngmarines.com/public/page/RedCord>.