Valentine's Day: An opportunity to choose love

By Chaplain Jack L. Carver

Linda was concerned about how her 9-year-old son was treated by his classmates. Each day, she stood at the door and watched the other kids gather as they walked home from the bus stop. Billy walked alone. Linda could only gasp, sigh and cry.

One day, Billy came home especially excited. "Mom! Friday is the class Valentine's Day party. Everyone in the class gets to bring valentines and we get to have snacks! Can you help me go get valentines for everyone?"

Thinking this might be a way to encourage the other kids to include her son, Linda agreed. So, they purchased materials and snacks for the party. They made a valentine for each classmate. Each valentine included a special message and some candy.

Linda smiled when she saw Billy's face light up with anticipation. He meticulously checked the class roster and double checked to make sure he included each classmate. "Not one, Mom. Not one," Billy said. "I don't want to miss one kid in my class." Linda smiled with ambivalence. On one hand, she was happy to see her son was not selfish and that he cared for everyone in his class. On the other hand, she had seen too many occasions when the other kids ignored Billy to believe he would be accepted by the other kids.

Billy awoke earlier than usual and got ready for school. Linda thought, "Maybe this will be a great day, after all." He sprung from his breakfast at the kitchen table and swung the straps of his backpack over his shoulders. He then grabbed the shoebox that contained the valentines and bolted to the door. On his way out he kissed his mom on the cheek and shouted, "Gotta go!"

The site of the bus stop seemed too familiar and ordinary for Linda's comfort, though. The other kids were standing on one side of the bus stop, with Billy standing by himself on the other side. Linda's eyes contained tears as she took in the site.

Throughout the day, Linda wondered how Billy's day would go. How would the other kids treat him? Why doesn't he fit in with the other kids? What had she done wrong as a mother? What does she need to teach her son?

Finally, the school bus arrived back at the bus stop. Linda went to the door. Her mouth dropped and her face expressed sheer disappointment over what she saw. Once again, the other kids were walking several yards in front of Billy, who walked by himself. They were carrying their valentines and candy, while they laughed and talked about their favorites. Billy was walking behind the other kids by himself. He had no valentines in his hands.

Linda thought, "This has got to stop."

Billy approached the door, "Mom! Mom! Not one! Not one!" Noticing her son had nothing in his hands, Linda grew more weary. "Mom! Not one. Not one!" Linda was weeping, desperately wondering what she was going to say to her son about the fact that not one classmate thought to include Billy.

Eventually, Billy reached the door. "Mom. Not one. Not one…"

Linda wanted to cover her ears, but instead extended her arms to hug Billy, who said, "I didn't forget one classmate. I remembered them all!"

Despite being forgotten, Billy was thrilled that he had not forgotten anyone.

It has been said many times that our greatest needs are to love and to be loved. Often, we have no control as to whether other people will choose to love us. We are left with the choice to demonstrate love to others, a choice upon which we can act.

Head's Up Yokosuka!

Community Announcements

New Beginnings Lodge Winter Bazaar – Come join New Beginnings lodge as they host their second annual winter bazaar, featuring oriental furniture, art, pottery and more, Feb. 14 and 15 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Thew Gym. Call Antoine Curry at 243-7788 or Raul Randle at 243-6120 for more information.

Passport Applications accepted at the Chapel of Hope – The United States Consul will be accepting first-time and renewal passport applications Feb. 27 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Chapel of Hope. For appointments, please call the U.S. Embassy at 03-3224-5000 and ask for the Passport Office.

Housing Multi-purpose Room Revised Policy – All Military Family Housing residents may make reservations 60 days in advance. The function must remain in the room. Use of the common areas such as the lobby, hallways, stairwells, elevator and etc., are prohibited. Children 10 years of age and younger must be supervised by an adult at all times. All windows and doors must be kept closed to reduce the noise level that may carry to the residents. Excessive disturbances and noise will not be tolerated at any time. Band practices or live musical entertainment is not permitted. Sponsors and their guests must use the overflow parking. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is permitted. Requestor assumes full responsibility for party alcohol beverage consumption. Smoking inside and use of barbeque is prohibited. Pets are not authorized. Contact the Housing Facilities Office at 243-9067 for more information.

Indoor Window Insulation Kit Now Available – The Housing Self-Help Center has vinyl sheeting available for all residents as a do-it-yourself project to help stop cold drafts and prevent frosty windows/doors. There are three sizes available to fit townhouses and towers. Call 243-9067 for more information.

American Red Cross Community Courses and Training – If you'd like to become a volunteer, register to attend one of our volunteer orientations held the first and third Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. Call 243-7490 for more information or register by visiting our office located on the 2nd floor of the Community Center.

Phishing e-mails – Recent reports of phishing attacks trying to entice users into providing personal login information have been noted. In addition, unsolicited e-mails asking users to click an embedded link that connects their computer to a hostile domain or malicious Web sites have shown up on Department of Defense networks. Navy Systems Administrators or legitimate businesses will never send you an e-mail message asking for your personal information. If you receive an e-mail such as the kind just described, do not reply providing the requested information, open any attachments or click on any links. Delete the e-mail and contact your network administrator immediately.

CFAY Qualified Recycling Program – The CFAY Qualified Recycling Program (QRP) recycles various items such as paper products, scrap metals, used vehicles and etc. Customers are able to dispose of items at no cost and QRP will be able to make a profit once a new QRP recycable materials contract is awarded. Profits are used to pay for approved base improvement projects. Call 243-6592 for more information.

USNH, YOSC co-host party for Kobo Cottage

Story and photo by Fumiyo Sato, CFAY Public Affairs

Staff members from U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka and members of Yokosuka Officer's Spouse Club (YOSC) co-hosted a party for children of Kobo Cottage at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Jan. 17.

Approximately 56 children of Kobo Cottage children's home came from Hayama to attend the annual party. "The children were so excited about coming here," said Esther Kiyomi Kaneko, Kobo Cottage director. "The bus left at 10 a.m., but they were outside waiting for the bus at 9 a.m."

Kaneko has been involved with the children's home since its beginning. Her mother was a second generation Japanese-American missionary and founded Kobo Cottage in 1952 for the purpose of helping children who lost their parents during World War II.

The party kicked off at Sbarros' Restaurant, where children sang songs including "*Country Home*" in English and played music using ordinary household items as instruments. "The children's performance was a huge surprise," said Amanda Reyes who participated in the event with her husband. "The costumes were very colorful and the overall performance was inspirational."

It was also a very fun time for the children because they received presents at the party. YOSC members collected gifts after receiving a wish list from the children's home, according to YOSC President Sandi Boggs. The wish list included umbrellas, pajamas, shoes and hats. "We also added some fun stuff," Boggs said. "We made sure they got at least two presents," added Elizabeth Goodwin, who coordinated making gift bags for the children.

Children from Kobo Cottage wait to start a game of bowling during a party co-hosted by USNH Yokosuka and YOSC held at the Yokosuka Bowling Center Jan. 17.

After eating pizza, they all walked to the Bowling Center. Volunteers, children and staff of Kobo Cottage teamed up and played a game of bowling. Despite the language barrier, children and Sailors communicated with each other using gestures.

Hospitalman Brian Lynn from USNH Yokosuka participated in the event for the first time. "Interaction with kids is a great experience," Lynn said. "It is hard to communicate with them, [because] I am still learning Japanese. But it is still fun and I can make them smile. I would love to visit them again."