A blast of chilly water helps welcome in the new year

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Swimmers jumped into Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka's (CFAY) Green Bay Marina for this year's Polar Bear Plunge Jan. 1. The event is held on New Year's Day and is a growing tradition at CFAY.

"We do a little bit of a ritual to make sure that people understand that it is important to be a Polar Bear," CFAY Morale, Welfare and Receation Director of Outdoor Recreation Steven Marksberry. "We read a inscription during a swearing in ceremony and have a little fun on New Years to give people something to remember it by before jumping in."

Military service members from both the enlisted and officer communities were there with family and other community members to all make the voluntary jump into the icy cold waters. While lifegaurd personnel were on standby in case the shock was too much for some, most of the participants said the jump was refreshing.

"It seemed like a good idea when I first heard about it but then I though just because 30 other people want to do it doesn't mean it's going to be a good thing," said Lt. j.g. Matthew Klein. "It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be."

Klein's jump into the water also marked the end of his tour in Japan. The next he would transfer from his orders as the auxiliary officer of *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62) and take an assignment stateside.

"It was great. We jumped in about when it is midnight in the states, I know the people back there don't get a chance to do something like this," said Klein. "I'm glad I took the opportunity to come out here to have some fun and participate in a community service event."

This year's plunge was unique because there was a fund drive for the local United Service Organization (USO) office, and if they met their fundraising goal three people; Lt. Cmdr. Jed Espiritu, Personnel Support Detachment Yokosuka Officer-in-Charge, Lt. Asa Kim, Negishi Housing Detachment Officer-in-Charge, and Jason Rouse, center operations manager for USO Yokosuka, would all have to jump in the water.

Military and community members jump into Green Bay Marina during a Polar Bear Plunge event held Jan. 1. The event has been gaining in popularity over the last seven years with more than 80 swimmers lining up to make the jump this year.

Rouse explained that their goal was to raise $1,000 dollars and after putting the information out through social media sites like CFAY's facebook page, they were able to get more than they asked for with final total for donation at just over $1,600.

"I did donate to the fundraiser before jumping," said Kleine. "It's a worthy cause and it was great to have those guys volunteer to jump in with us."

With attendance growing every year, from an initial 30 people seven years ago to the 80 that made the plunge this year, Marksberry said that the event will return next year.

New Year's resolution: Kicking the habit with classes, online help

Story and photo by Jeffrey C. Doepp, CFAY Public Affairs

Traditionally, New Year's Eve is a time for looking back to the past, and more importantly, forward to the coming year. It's a time to reflect on the changes we want or need to make and resolve to follow through on those changes.

A New Year's resolution is a commitment that a person makes to one or more personal goals, projects or the reforming of a habit. Losing weight, physical fitness, saving money or quitting smoking are some of the most common New Year's resolutions.

Trying to quit smoking can be a difficult task. There is the psychological dependence, the habit, and lastly, the addiction. All of these combined make quitting a task that, for some, may be too hard to accomplish.

There are an increasing number of programs and medicines that can help smokers kick the habit. One such program is the smoking cessation program at U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka.

According to USNH Yokosuka Health Promotion Department Head Rhea Daniels, smoking cessation is the process of discontinuing the practice of using any tobacco product and can occur with or without assistance from health care professionals or the use of medication.

"Several various methods have been found to be effective to include medications including nicotine replacement therapy (NRT); individual and group counseling and or, web-based and computer programs," Daniels said.

In addition to the tobacco cessation classes offered at USNH Yokosuka, the Department of Defense offers the internet-based Train2Quit program, a self-paced, online support system that prepares tobacco users to kick the habit.

Image courtesy of www.ucanquit2.org

The tobacco cessation program offered at USNH Yokosuka consists of four class sessions where patients are led through behavior modification techniques, NRT options, recovery from relapse options and follow up care.

"Patients are also required to see a health-care provider to discuss and access which, if any, NRT options would be best suited for each patient," Daniels said.

The tobacco cessation program is free of charge and open to all active duty service members, civilians and their family members.

"There is no cost to attend the classes, but if you are not a part of TRICARE, you may have to pay for the medications," said USNH Yokosuka Tobacco Cessation Facilitator Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Katina Jack.

In addition to the tobacco cessation classes offered at USNH Yokosuka, the Department of Defense (DoD) offers the internet-based Train2Quit program, a self-paced, online support system that prepares tobacco users to kick the habit at www.ucanquit2.org.

"Sometimes patients are unable to attend the required class sessions due to deployment, underway ship periods or temporary additional duty," said USNH Yokosuka Tobacco Cessation Facilitator Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kelly Hood. "Online tobacco cessation programs are an excellent and viable alternative."

Hood offers up the following advice to those thinking about quitting tobacco:

• Preparing yourself before you quit. Get your mindset ready for a life without nicotine. Think about your reasons for quitting.

• Think about what would motivate you to quit. It is important to have your own reasons for quitting.

• Talk to your family and friends about quitting. Their support might help you decide to quit and stay quit.

• Look forward to the rewards of quitting such as improved health and an increase in money not spent on tobacco products.

• Prepare for roadblocks that could make you start using tobacco again. These roadblocks could be events, places or even people. Alcohol, stress and being around other tobacco users are major triggers that could cause you to start up again. You can't always avoid these challenges, but you can plan for how to deal with them.

• Use the tobacco cessation program and the online resources Navy Medicine and the DoD provides to improve the likelihood of your personal success.

• At the end of each smoking cessation program, each patient is given a personalized health fitness assessment that provides a healthy eating plan and exercise prescription program.

"The aim is to help patients replace an unhealthy habit with healthier habits," Hood added.

For more information about tobacco cessation programs, contact the USNH Yokosuka Health Promotions Department at 243-9776.

For more information on the online program Train2Quit, visit the website www.ucanquit2.org.