Living a life of peace and goodwill

By Chaplain Corey Thornton

The new year has come and the holiday season is behind us for another 10 or so months.

However, those of us in the care-giving business are gravely aware that depression and suicide rates in the military are likely to be the highest of the year over these next few months.

It seems that people struggle to come back to their routine lives after the holidays. As I reflected on this a few thoughts came to mind that I would like to share here.

What is it about the holidays that give us hope and happiness? The simple answer is likely that they bring an opportunity for liberty, a time to get away from the stressors and challenges our everyday lives. I'm going to add another aspect to this that might not include everyone but I think most can identify with.

Over the holidays we tend to engage with family and friends in the celebration of our highest ideals.

In my tradition, Christians celebrate one of the two largest feasts of the year during Christmas. For us, to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ is to celebrate that which gives our lives meaning and hope; a hope filled with peace and goodwill towards all.

We not only celebrate Christmas in our homes but with the gathering of worshippers in congregations all around the world.

The unity and togetherness of events like these gives sustenance to our souls, like a kind of spiritual nourishment with which to carry on living.

Perhaps in a not too dissimilar way the other holiday gatherings of the season bring about their own sense of togetherness.

I imagine that even those events that we would rather not be apart of, those obligatory gatherings that we attend out of social convention, can still contribute to the positive development of relationships with others.

Though I imagine that each of us brings a unique perspective to the holiday season, I am quite certain that most will find that they have interacted in a personal way with more people during this time than they do the rest of the year. These interactions tend to develop into a form of care and social connectedness that many find brings continuity and meaning to their lives.

If this is true for you, then a question begs to be asked: why don't we continue through the year in this same fashion? Why do we tend to neglect our worship to God and striving for our highest ideals after Christmas? Why do we lessen our efforts to connect to family, friends and colleagues after the holidays? If returning to military service and resuming the normal routine of life is difficult for so many, why don't we find ways to make our world a better place to live in from January to October? Is it possible that we can celebrate our faith on days other than Christmas and Easter? Can we give a random gift or extend special thanksgiving and kindness to others throughout the year? Why not celebrate life in the here and now?

It seems that each new year we feel compelled to set resolutions for self-improvement. Perhaps a good one this year would be to maintain the holiday spirit each and every day of the year.

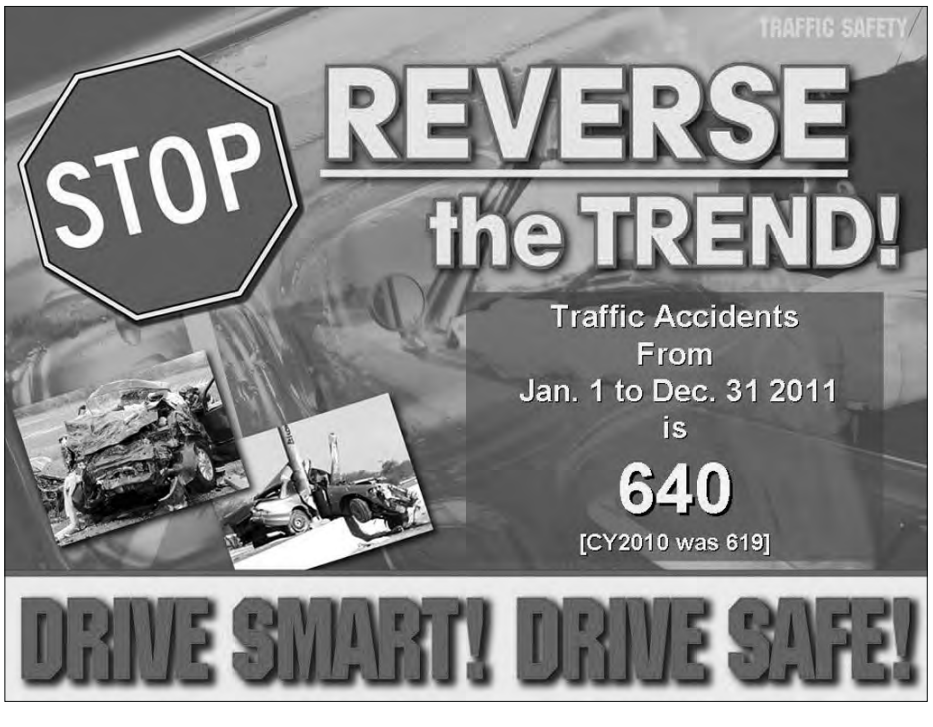
It is likely that most of us could not afford the investment required to purchase gifts and attend holiday parties year-round.

But the efforts made to relate to others, to let them know that they are not alone and that they are cherished and cared for, must be of real value. Certainly investing time and energy to be available to God, the ultimate source and grounding of our lives, is a worthy pursuit.

The way we go about the holidays is the way we should consider living our lives.

If there is hope for living in December, then certainly there is hope for living in January as well. To wring the wealth and meaning of life is to truly live it.

So while you are getting back into the routine of your life and staring another year in the face, remember the blessings of the holidays and keep that light of hope burning brightly right where you are.



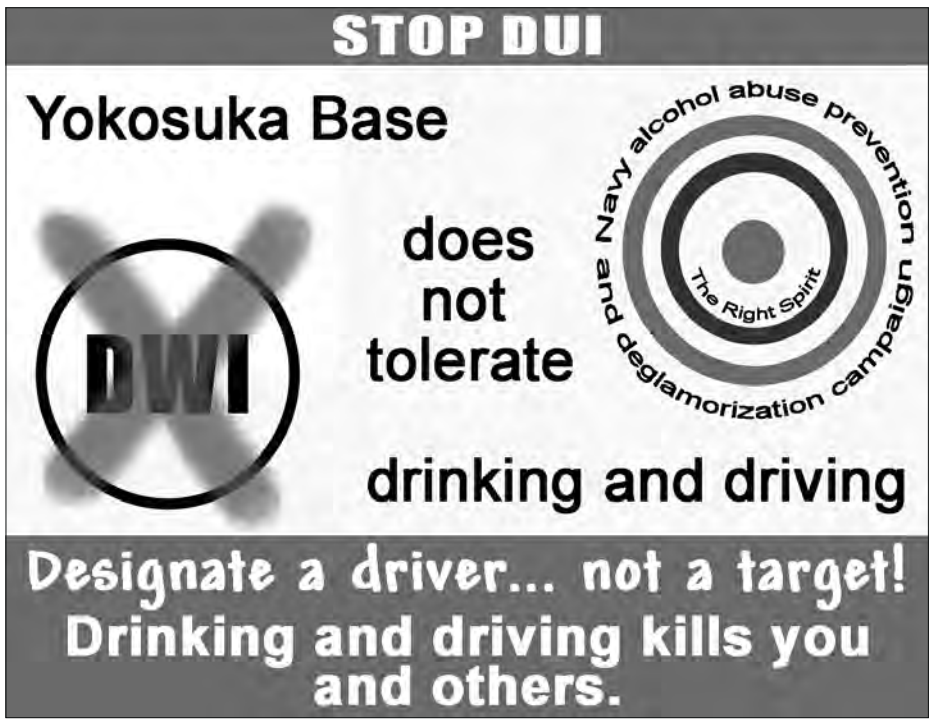
Recently at the courthouse

From Region Legal Services Office

The following cases were recently heard at courts-martial in Navy Region Japan:

A General Court-Martial found an E-6 guilty of false official statements and larceny of Basic Allowances for Housing in the amount of $72,336.00. The E-6 was awarded a Bad-Conduct Discharge, 9 months confinement, reduction to the paygrade of E-1, total forfeitures of all pay and allowances, and a fine in the form of 3 years and 3 months additional confinement if the sum of $72,336 is not paid by Jan. 31.

A General Court-Martial found an E-1 found guilty of introduction of marijuana onto a vessel, distribution of marijuana and codeine while onboard a vessel, possession of marijuana while onboard a vessel, and use of marijuana onboard ship. The E-1 received was awarded a Dishonorable Discharge, confinement for 4 years, and total forfeitures of all pay and allowances.

A General Court-Martial found an E-1 guilty of attempted aggravated sexual assault and false official statements. The E-1 was awarded a Bad Conduct Discharge and confinement for 4 months.

A General Court-Martial found an E-5 found guilty of rape and aggravated sexual assault. The E-5 was awarded a Dishonorable Discharge, confinement for 5 years, reduction to the paygrade of E-1, and total forfeitures of all pay and allowances.