Don't judge me

By Chaplain Allen Vaughan

Most people, if asked, can quote at least one verse from the Bible, even if they have never read the Bible and don't profess to have any religious faith at all. The verse to which I am referring is: "Judge not, or you will also be judged." Some may not also know that these words were spoken by Jesus and are found in Matthew 7:1. But, this is one those oft-quoted verses of the Bible that many people have embraced and made a part of their personal beliefs, regardless of religious background. The shorthand version of this, which we hear used nowadays is, "Don't judge me."

I've always struggled with this statement somewhat, because we are called upon to make judgments every day. We make judgments on whether we have had too much to drink before getting behind the wheel of a car. We make judgments on whether or not to reply to spam e-mail. We are expected to make judgments about what is right or wrong, what is good behavior or bad behavior. But, when it comes to making judgments about people, it gets a little sticky.

There is a difference between making judgments and passing judgment. We can and should make judgments every day, based upon observable behavior and the values we hold. I might observe that a buddy of mine has been drinking and can barely stand up or walk. I value human life and safety, so I will make a judgment to take his keys away or refuse to get in a car with him.

Passing judgment means that we assume to know what is in a person's heart. If I assume that every drunk driver is a selfish, unthinking, cold-hearted individual who probably woke up in the morning determined to place his life and the lives of anyone near him in danger after a few drinks, then I would be passing judgment.

Let's bring this a little closer to home. When someone we spend a lot of time with everyday—like a roommate, a shipmate, or a loved one—does something wrong or hurtful, we are frequently placed in a position to either make a judgment or pass judgment. One of the challenges in a situation like this is that, normally, no one wants to be accused of being judgmental.

If we speak up or speak out about behavior we think is wrong, then the other person may throw out the dreaded phrase, "Don't judge me!" Because, "If you judge me, then you are not being very nice; you are not following what the Bible says; or you are trying to impose your values and your morality on me. And, you shouldn't do that."

Like I said, we can and should make judgments based upon observable behavior and our closely held values. When we pass judgment, we begin to make assumptions about motives or what could have been in a person's heart when they did something wrong.

The Bible tells us that God alone knows what is in the human heart and can pass judgment on what is found in our hearts. However, the Bible also gives us very clear guidance about what is right and wrong, and our Creator expects us to make good judgments in order to avoid the wrong and embrace what is right.

Romain cont. from pg.1

"Reach out to connect and get help from friends, parents, teachers, and counselors," Romain continued. "Reach up to do something positive to help you with those feelings like writing in a journal, like drawing, like exercise even," Romain said. "It's OK to be angry. It's OK to be sad. It's Ok to be stressed. It's what we do with those feelings that are important."

Stephanie Pridell, a member of the Trevor Romain Company, also spoke to the students. She told them about her life as a military child and the obstacles she faced, and about the benefits of being in a military family.

"You have an important job to support your moms and dads who are doing a really important job for our country and countries all over the world by protecting people and helping people in need," said Pridell.

Along with talking to students about the stresses of military life, the presentation featured information on how to deal with bullies, helping friends through a deployment and taking care of yourself by eating right and doing your homework on time.

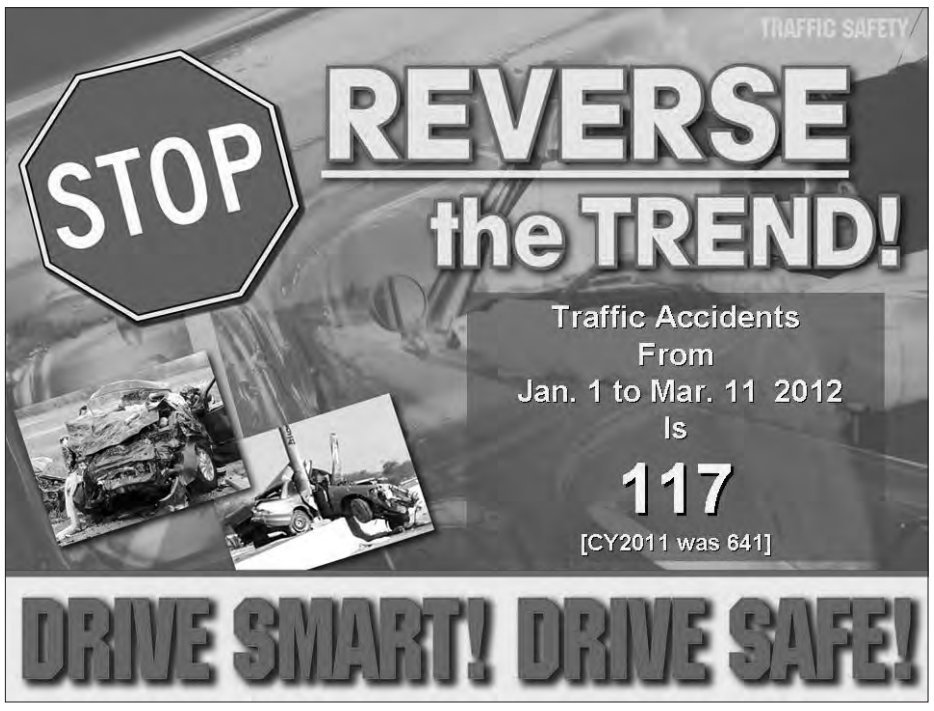
Richardson-Murphy said she has seen firsthand how Romain's materials have helped students and uses them as a resource to teach students about bullying.

"It's amazing to see the students attempt to resolve their issues using strategies they've learned from (Romain)," said Richardson-Murphy.

Romain said he is proud to work with children around the world. He has been to more than 30 bases to speak to military children. Along with his speaking events Romain is the president of the American Childhood Cancer Organization and co-founder of the non-profit Comfort Crew for Military Kids which creates, produces and distributes a series of programs to military children who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

"As an American by choice I am so honored and proud to be given permission to work with military kids. They serve too. They didn't choose to be military kids," he said.

The visit to The Sullivans School was part of Romain's Pacific tour. He also made stops in Hawaii, Guam, and Korea.



CFAY VITA Center Tip of the Week

Tax day: The income tax filing date is normally April 15th, but because this year it falls on Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C., the filing date has been extended to April 17th.

If you are living outside of the U.S., you can get a two-month extension (making the due date June 15th), but it is only an extension to FILE not an extension to PAY.

That means that if you take the two month extension and the IRS determines that you owe money, you will also owe interest on that debt for the two months that have passed since the filing deadline.

If you are owed a tax refund by the IRS, it has no major negative effect.

Exchange cont. from pg.10

Language Support Services (LSS) and the Spanish language immersion program. The participants spent their afternoon in a question and answer session with Sullivans administration and special educators.

This year, Junichi Tamura, a Professor at Teikyo University, special education department and 10 graduate students from the school attended. Tamura expressed gratitude at the opportunity to observe the application of these programs without the expense of an overseas trip.

They were accompanied by Hiroyasu Yamada, a water front technical advisor who currently works at CFAY Ship Repair Facility (SRF) and the Japan Regional Maintenance Center (JRMC).

Yamada is a father of 2 special education children himself. Yamada assists in the organization of the visit each year and will help to organize a reciprocal visit for the American special educators next year. In the past, Yamada has arranged visits to Takeyama Yogo School in 2008 and Yokohama National University Handicapped School in 2006. He believes the exchange of information will lead to new classes and styles of teaching in his country.

Victoria Araki, Sullivans School speechlanguage pathologist, organized the event for the Sullivans.

"We look forward to learning about the special education programs of our host country," said Araki. "Some of our students transfer from Japanese schools and in some case where the family loses sponsorship, they must consider sending their children to Japanese schools and receiving special education services that are quite different from our school system. We also need to be more familiar with the customs of the local community to embrace diversity in our school."

Rosanna Currier, Sullivans principal stated, "Our team lead them on an extensive tour through the building and were challenged to keep them moving. They were so impressed with each classroom that they visited; it was difficult to get them to move on to the next. Truly it was a very pleasant and positive learning experience for all involved."

Traci Polidor, Sullivans case study committee chair, is already looking forward to visiting a Japanese School next year as part of the exchange program.

"It is a nice exchange, having the back-and-forth communication so that we can both learn from each other about how each system is growing and changing," Polidor said.