Spouses 'learn the ropes' of U.S. Navy history, lifestyle

Story and photo by Jamie Chevalier, Seahawk contributor

New Navy spouses attended a three day class offered by Fleet and Family Services (FFSC) designed to teach them about the history of the Navy as well as give them insight into the Navy way of life.

COMPASS class is a spouse-to-spouse mentoring program that introduces new spouses to everything from how to read a leave and earning statement (LES) to how to recognize ranks on uniforms.

Jacqueline Nuttall is a COMPASS volunteer. She got involved after attending a class. She said one of the benefits of the class is all the different things spouses can learn.

"We talk about the history of the Navy, for examples its traditions and ceremonies. Finances, ways to deal with deployment, sharing moving tips and information, local insights, and healthy communication," Nuttall said.

Carrie Gaynor has been married to her sailor husband for six months. She took the class so she could learn about the resources available to her.

"Logistically, you have to do many things people in the civilian world don't even have to think about. So I wanted to know what was available to me, and I want to know this base and its departments well," she said.

Gaynor said the other wives quickly put her at ease.

"We shared anecdotes and I got a lot of good advice for thriving in the Navy. And it's always comforting to relate to other people! Compass provided a casual atmosphere where we could quickly be comfortable with each other," she said.

COMPASS is offered once a quarter, but Nuttall said it could be more often if there is a need. The next one is scheduled for June. For more information people can visit http://gocompass.org/ or e-mail njacart@yahoo.com.

(Right) Emily Kirkpatrick and Jacqueline Nuttall speak to Navy spouses who took the COMPASS class. COMPASS is a three day spouse-to-spouse mentoring program that introduces participants to all aspects of the military lifestyle.

Negishi housing questions, answers from March town hall meeting

Editor's Note: The following Q-and-A is from Negishi's town hall meeting held March 21.

Question 1: Concerning occupancy of Negishi.

Q: Personnel are being placed within the Navy Lodge for extended periods of time. Though Negishi Housing has vacancies, these personnel are not being offered to move in at a timely fashion.

A: There is an allowed percentage of civilian and military personnel living in Negishi Housing. Though it is currently over the percentage, it may continue to be that way.

Question 2: Hopes of obtaining a new Dog Park.

Q: There is a lot, the putt-putt course, which is not in use. Is it possible to modify that into a dog park?

A: We are already currently looking into this. In its current state, it would not be a valid dog park. The instruction was re-written for Negishi housing to allow three dogs instead of two, so it's important to have a place for them to run. The answer lies in funding and who will take responsibility in the maintenance of the dog park.

Question 3: Children taking the Home-To-Work bus.

Q: There are children being told that they can not ride the home-to-work bus back to Negishi. They are children and should not be stranded in Yokosuka or be forced to take the train home. As well, there are children stating that they are being harassed on the bus by adults – both civilian and military.

A: The instruction says that all children will get on the bus at the last stop, the Hospital stop. This is to assure that all active duty military members and DoD civilians are aboard already. This is for both the 1600 and the 1700 buses. We will begin to broadcast local commercials on AFN which will educate everybody on this matter, as well as include it in the Monthly Newsletter.

Question 4: Children taking the Activity bus.

Q: The Activity Bus stops at Ikego before it continues to Negishi. This causes trouble for the children, who arrive home around 1930 every night and barely have time to complete homework and shower. There are children staying in Yokosuka after school for social visits instead of school activities, taking seats from those who need them. Is it possible that children who play sports could get some form of ID so that they could have priority in seating?

A: If another Activity bus is needed, it will have to be approved by DODEA, as they are responsible for the after-school transportation. I have spoken to DODEA and CNFJ about this issue. Because of these problems, we allow children to ride the home-to-work bus if there is space available. The idea of IDs is a good one. I will bring it up to DODEA.

Question 5: The Home-to-Work bus route.

Q: The bus is not taking the most expeditious route. On the ride to work, we could cut twenty minutes by going through the base again instead of going all the way around the park. When we're going home the bus takes a right after the hospital and, pending on traffic, can add another thirty minutes or more to the trip. Couldn't they just cut through the hill without stopping to save time? That way the last stop would still be the hospital, so the children can board?

Med Chief: That's a good idea. I'll bring it up to them.

Question 6: Difficulties dialing emergency numbers.

Q: Can we have landlines placed in the houses that could just be for dialing emergency numbers? Not all residents know how to call 911 from a cell phone.

A: Emergency numbers are posted on the back of your driver's license, the back of the phone cards sold at the NEX, and when dialing from a cell phone it is 046816911

Question 7: NGIS Confusion.

Q: Negishi's NGIS was turning away people seeking reservations. By having to place people out in town, the Navy is spending a significant sum when it is not needed if the hotel has space. Suddenly, they are taking reservations again, and it is all very confusing.

A: I'm sorry. I didn't know about that. I'll have to get back to you with that information.

Question 8: Branch Medical/Dental hours and services.

Q: Will the working hours of the clinic remain Tuesdays and Thursdays? Is it possible to get another day? What is available to us concerning emergency services?

A: All seven of our branch clinics have the same hours and are open Thuesdays and Thursdays for appointments, and Monday through Friday for prescription pick-ups. As it is, on average the doctor is only seeing, on average, 9 out of 16 available appointments during the working day. We aren't seeing the participation that could support an additional day. As for emergency services, there is a Corpsman in the clinic 24/7. While they can only administer basic first-aid, they are there to drive you to Yokosuka ER in the ambulance.

Q: Would it be possible to get partial dental services here?

A: While there has not been a dental capability for 6 years, we are deciding if it would be beneficial to employ a dental provider. Based on the amount of patients that attend the clinic, we're unsure that, if we were to make it available, we could sustain this service.

Concern: Safety issues with cross-walks in housing.

Q: The cross-walk near 3rd street was moved. Residents on confused on where they can cross, while still using the old spot. There is also a blind spot by the front gate, where vehicles cannot see people walking. A mirror placed at the gate would easily fix the situation.

A: The previous position of the cross-walk was hazardous because it was placed in a blind spot. It has been moved down the street for safety reasons, as well as having the curb lowered for pedestrian use. As for the mirror, this is a safety issue and we will look into it.