Region Japan Sailors selected for Nurse Corps commission

By MC3 Dominique Pineiro, CNFJ Public Affairs

Sailors from across Navy Region Japan were notified of their selection for the Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program (MECP) Feb. 4.

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Jason McDonald, assigned to U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Katelyn Leach, assigned to USNH Okinawa, were two of the Sailors selected for the program. The program allows them to complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree in 36 months, after which they will be commissioned as ensigns in the Navy Nurse Corps.

HM1 Jason McDonald, assigned to USNH Yokosuka, was notified of his selection for the Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program Feb 4. The program allows McDonald to complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree in 36 months, after which he will be commissioned as an ensign in the Navy Nurse Corps.

Photo by Richard McManus

McDonald chose to pursue his nursing degree at the University of South Carolina and said the level of dedication the Nurse Corps shows on a day-to-day basis inspired him to apply for MECP.

"It's the precedent and the standards that the Nurse Corps officers show," said McDonald. "They come to work early and leave late. They dedicate their work to the sustainment of life."

Leach, who will attend Seattle University, said that when she heard of her selection she couldn't believe it at first. She said all she'd ever wanted to be was a nurse.

"As a corpsman I witnessed first hand the importance of Navy medicine and the important roles that nurses have," said Leach. "They taught me and were patient with me. I find it truly significant that now I will be afforded the opportunity to teach my corpsmen and I finally have the opportunity to fulfill my dream of being a [Navy] nurse."

McDonald offered his advice to Sailors seeking to get a commission through MECP or other programs the Navy offers.

"Sustained performance and deployment time is key," said McDonald. "Keep your options open. Deploy all that you can and obtain your warfare device at the first opportunity and make sure you get your education."

Leach emphasized the importance of superior performance as well. She noted that after she was not selected for the program last year she continued to exhibit a strong work ethic and garnered the support of her chain of command. That support maintained her motivation and her message to others is to not be discouraged if you're not selected the first time.

"I didn't get selected last year and I thought maybe I was not the type of candidate they were seeking for this particular program," said Leach. "Don't give up. If you don't get selected the first time try again and again. Find others who have been selected and ask them to mentor you.

The MECP is open to active duty enlisted Sailors and Marines looking to earn a nursing degree and a commission.

There are several requirements that must be met for consideration into the MECP. Visit the Navy Medicine, Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education Command Web site at http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/navmedmpte/Pages/MedicalEnlistedCommissioningProgramFrequentlyAskedQuestions.aspx for more information or details on how to apply.

Sexual Assault Prevention, Response advocates assists those in need

By MC3 Devon Dow,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

In alignment with the Department of Defense (DoD) "zero tolerance" stance against sexual assault in the armed forces, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program assists service members and their families who are victims in need.

At Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Fleet Family Support Center, SAPR victim advocates are professionally trained volunteers, available any time day or night. At any given time there are three victim advocates on call to provide victims of sexual assault with information and emotional support and help guide them through the various medical, legal and investigative processes with the goal of minimizing the "re-victimization" of sexual assault victims.

"I think the program is working very well for our base," said Theodore E. Joyner, Sexual Assault Response coordinator. "Our advocates are there with victims through their difficult times, providing them with moral support because they care. This is a volunteer program, the advocates are not professional counselors, and no one is told to sign up for this, that alone show's the character of the men and women on this base."

Advocates are either on shore supporting victims or attached to ships when they depart for sea. SAPR provides trained advocates to ships to meet the need of the respective command. On shore, the advocates fulfill the duties of being on call to assist victims who need assistance. All volunteers participate in regularly scheduled training sessions to keep their support skills sharp and review DoD policy.

Individuals interested in becoming command victim advocates must be attached to the command and first meet the age requirement of 21 years old. The volunteers then are required to complete a four-day class that covers a variety of instructions and regulations that must be adhered to for successful sexual assault victim support.

"During the classes we invite members of the legal and medical community here who play a role in sexual assault cases and let them speak to the class," Joyner said. "In doing this we want to show the class the joint effort used by the community to prevent sexual assaults."

Established in 1994 under the name Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI), the title was recently changed to Sexual Assault Prevention and Response or SAPR to align with the Department of the Navy SAPR Office and DoD policy.

(Right) SAPR Program Coordinator Theodore Joyner, teaches the SAPR program to volunteers at the CFAY Fleet and Family Support Center Feb 16. The 4-day training introduces volunteers to the responsibilities of a victim advocate. A victim advocate acts as first responder to sexual assault victims.

Photo by Natasha Sears

Veterinary service provides top-notch care for furry family members

By U.S. Army Veterinary Command, Yokosuka Branch Veterinary Service

If you have a pet, chances are you have been to the Yokosuka Veterinary Treatment Facility (VTF). The Yokosuka VTF is run by the Yokosuka Branch Veterinary Service, a unit of the U.S. Army Veterinary Command, and in many ways is just like a civilian veterinary clinic. The VTF, located next door to the Navy Exchange boarding kennel and pet groomer, offers routine vaccinations, sick call, dental cleanings and surgeries.

The VTF maintains registration records for all pets living on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka and associated housing areas. Through these records, the VTF ensures that pet owners stay compliant with base and government of Japan animal regulations, such as the mandate to keep vaccines up to date. The VTF staff sends postcards to remind customers of when the annual visit of their pet is due. You must register your pet with the VTF. Registering means peace of mind for you, since our records let us quickly trace a lost pet back to its family. Because of this, be sure to transfer registration of your pet if you give it to someone else.

Unlike a civilian veterinarian, services are sometimes not available because of other mission requirements. There are two veterinarians at the VTF – one military and one civilian. The military veterinarian also serves as the officer-in-charge of the Yokosuka Branch Veterinary Service. Supporting three offices in Yokosuka, Negishi and Ikego and sustaining a mission that provides veterinary care to pets and military working dogs, animal control, public health and food safety, the Army veterinarian may not always be available. The Army veterinarians in Japan also provide veterinary services for military exercises such as Cobra Gold in Thailand and Balikatan in the Philippines.

It is advisable to know the locations and hours of off-base veterinarians in the event the VTF veterinarian is unavailable. The VTF can provide you with information about off-base veterinary clinics that speak English.

If you are a regular customer, you may notice some changes to the VTF starting March 1. The changes are part of an Army Veterinary Command initiative to assume fiscal responsibility of the more than 180 clinics around the world from the local installations.

Once the VTF transition to a consolidated fund is complete, the VTF will have greater flexibility to expand their services. However, since there has never been a consolidated veterinary operating fund before, some of the fees will be raised across the command in order to raise working capital. One of the changes is the addition of an exam fee. In the past, appointments with the veterinarian were free. Now a $25 exam fee will be charged for visits with the veterinarian and a $10 fee will be assessed for visits with the veterinary technician.

In addition, the VTF is now offering wellness packages. The comprehensive care provided in the wellness packages, when done at least once or twice a year, is the most important preventative measure that you can provide for your pet. Vaccinations are just one component of the wellness package. The screening provided by the wellness exam in combination with the diagnostic testing creates an opportunity for detecting and preventing medical problems at an early stage. The packages were created with the unique needs of the mobile, military pet population in mind and are designed to streamline your clinic experience.

Remember, animals age at a much faster rate than humans, so a once yearly exam is similar to a human getting a physical every 5-7 years. The clinic is open Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 7:30 a.m. to noon on Friday. Call 243-6820 to make an appointment or for more information.