NAVYForMoms.com Web site brings families together

By Lee Buchschacher,
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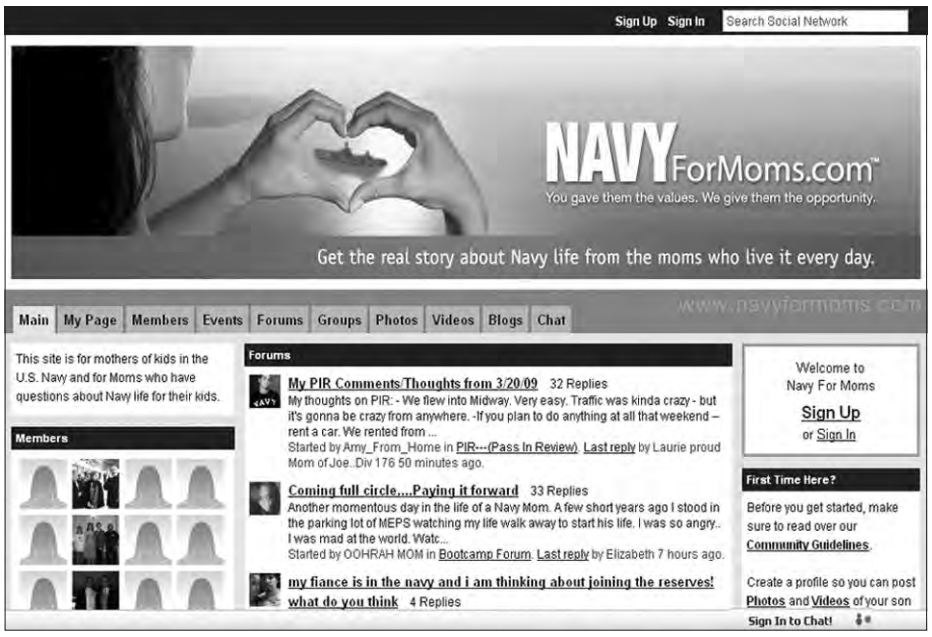
Social networking Web site NAVYForMoms.com is celebrating its first year online with a look back at its accomplishments.

The Web site has transformed the military community by providing a platform where moms, dads, brothers, sisters and other family and friends with loved ones in the Navy or considering joining can come together to answer each other's questions and support one another.

Since its inception, nearly 14,000 people have become members of NAVYForMoms.com, and more than 412,000 people have visited the site, with over 1.4 million total visits. February recorded the largest number of hits to date with more than 210,000 clicks on the site.

In addition to providing a forum to discuss the Navy, NAVYForMoms.com has also been instrumental in bringing Navy families together in person. The Web site held "Paint the Town Blue" events in places like Boston and New York in 2008 giving members a chance to meet each other face to face and express their Navy pride. NAVYForMoms.com also arranged for surprise reunions between Sailors and their mothers at New York sporting events. Members also attended tapings of 'Live! With Regis and Kelly' and 'The Late Show with David Letterman.'

Many NAVYForMoms.com members have also taken time out of their daily lives to organize their own events. There have been more than 145 off-line events organized by members since the site's inception. Moms get together for coffee, to participate in walks and parades, and even meet to assemble care packages for their Sailors.



The NavyForMoms.com Web site has transformed the military community by providing a platform where moms, dads, brothers, sisters and other family and friends with loved ones in the Navy or considering joining can come together to answer each other's questions and support one another.

"Everywhere I go there is another NAVYForMoms.com friend I can visit," said Joyce Slabaugh from Tucson, Ariz. "It's great to get to know folks from across the country, and to come together as a community to support all of our Sailors with efforts like the Adopt a Sailor Project and Knit for the Navy."

As one of the most active groups on NAVYForMoms.com, the "Adopt a Sailor" group sends care packages and greeting cards to a designated unit each month. Participation has become so widespread, that Molly Gisi, the group's creator, has begun to take on entire ships for various holidays.

Gisi and her NAVYForMoms.com friends gathered 750 International calling cards to deliver to the *USS. Rodney M. Davis* (FFG 60) this past December, brightening the holidays for an entire ship by providing each Sailor on board with a way to call home not just once, but three times.

The 'Knit for the Navy' group is a similar effort with members using their free time to knit homemade blankets for deployed Sailors. The group plans to spread their warmth one ship at a time, and in just a few months has created more than 40 blankets for Sailors aboard *USS Tennessee* (SSBN 734).

"The friendships we've built and the amount of support we've been able to provide in such a short period of time is so inspiring," said Gisi. "I can't wait to see what the next year brings for NAVYForMoms.com."

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

By Robyn L. Wilson, FFSC, Family Victim Advocate

Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since 1983. Each year, tens of thousands of children are traumatized by parents or other caregivers who abuse and neglect them. The scars of an abused child can have long-lasting affects. Child abuse is associated with school failure, criminality, drug and alcohol abuse, and long term health problems (both physical and psychological).

In communities around the country, Child Abuse Prevention Month is observed in an effort to raise awareness, to promote nonviolent discipline and to encourage good communication between parents and children. This is also the perfect time to inform families about community resources.

What is child abuse/neglect? Child abuse and neglect refers to maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 committed by his or her parent or guardian or other caretaker. There are four broad categories:

• Physical abuse - A non-accidental physical injury or threat of injury, such as bruises, broken bones, burns, bites or shaking.

• Child neglect – Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm, such as abandonment or lack of adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care, proper hygiene or supervision.

• Sexual abuse – Acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation, or any sexual behavior in violation of the law, such as incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, and child pornography or child prostitution.

• Emotional maltreatment – A chronic pattern of behavior including verbal assault, such as screaming, intimidating, ridiculing, blaming or failure to provide necessary support, attention and affection, such as ignoring, indifference, or intense chronic family conflict.

What to do if you suspect child abuse/neglect? If you think a child is being abused, report it to the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) at 243-7878. Always think safety first – If you think a child is in immediate danger, call CFAY Security first at 243-5000 (046-816-5000) or 911 (on base) or 119 (off base).

Please join the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) in public awareness by wearing the blue ribbon which symbolizes child abuse prevention. You can pick up a blue ribbon at our office located on the second floor of Building 1555.

The Blue Ribbon movement began in the spring of 1989, when a concerned grandmother, Bonnie Finney, of Norfolk, Va., took a stand against child abuse after experiencing the death of her grandson. She tied a symbolic blue ribbon to her van as a signal to her community of her personal commitment to involve everyone in the battle to stop child abuse. The spirit of her blue ribbon grew and it inspired a nationwide community based effort to join forces in this tragic battle of child abuse.

During the month of April, FFSC will have informational booths to provide resource material to the community as an effort to raise awareness on child abuse prevention. Please come out and join FFSC in the efforts to stop child abuse and neglect.

Contact FFSC Family Advocacy Program at 243-7878 for more information or to report suspected child abuse.

Pet of the Week

This weeks Pet of the Week is Dexter. Dexter is a 4-year-old male Minature Dachshund just waiting for you to take him home. He has recently overcome heart worm disease and is looking for a second chance at life with a fun, loving family. Dexter would do well in a home with children and other pets. To find out more about Dexter or any animal at P.A.W.S., contact them at 243-9996, by e-mail to usskittytalk@hotmail.com or visit the P.A.W.S. Web site at www.pawsyokosukajapan.com.

Photo by Joy Jill Photography