Singling out single parents

By Chaplain Jack Carver

Have you ever discovered yourself secretly wishing you had someone to help you out, but decided not to ask for fear of what people might think? Maybe you chose not to ask because you were afraid others would perceive you as being weak, needy or incompetent. Other people told you, "If you need something, just let me know." However, you chose not to take people up on their offers, thinking they only say such things because they feel compelled, or you simply did not sense that the offers were sincere.

So, you know how it feels to need and want help, while feeling like you would be sending the wrong message by accepting help.

Now consider another perspective. Suppose you had a magic sensor that told you whenever people harbored this experience. They need help, but refuse to ask and won't tell anyone. You observe their struggles, as their lives become more difficult than necessary. You note they never accept help, even after you sincerely and generously offer to assist. You're inclined to ask, "Why does it have to be so hard?"

We all know how difficult it is to be vulnerable. In our challenging and professional environment, we sometimes mistakenly expect ourselves to be superhuman. We spend an enormous amount of energy attempting to convince ourselves and the world around us "I got it." When it comes to meeting the basic competencies of our professions and basic life skills, "I got it" prevails. However, sickness happens at all levels of our lives: physical, emotional and spiritual. Sometimes, life events beyond control happen and we find it difficult to give ourselves permission to accept help.

One segment of military culture who knows this better than anyone else is the single-parent population.

According to the Department of Defense statistics, approximately 5.1 percent of active duty military members are single parents. Military families headed by single parents experience multiple stressors uncommon to civilian families and traditional two-parent families. While military communities have been blessed with comprehensive resources, most of them are more specifically designed to meet the needs of single service members with no family members and traditional two-parent households.

The single parents whom I encounter go to great lengths to ensure they are not a burden to anyone. They don't want anyone feeling sorry for them. They are consummate professionals, ready to meet the demands of the mission. This entails waking up an hour earlier than parents in two-parent families to prepare bottles, diaper bags and backpacks. They carry the entire burden of working out logistics and attendance at soccer practices, dance rehearsal and parent-teacher conferences. Little reinforcement is available for those occasions in which their children don't appropriately respond to discipline. They keep close watch over their address books and calendars, so they are always ready to call a baby-sitter should they need one. They participate in command formations before working hours and attend command functions in the evenings. When they receive orders to forward-deployed commands, they spend an enormous amount of emotional energy and financial resources to ensure their children will be cared for and safe while they carry out operational duties.

So, if you have a burden to help someone, take a look around your neighborhood or down the hallway of your tower. If you see a single parent, consider it a sign that your sensor has been activated and that you're looking at a highly competent professional who is not comfortable asking for help. Let him or her know life doesn't have to be so hard and that you're available and then take in the blessings of a good samaritan.

Heads Up Yokosuka

Community Announcements

Base Movie Theater Closure – The Fleet Theater will be closed Oct. 6 to Nov. 3 and the Benny Decker Theater will be closed Nov. 4 to Dec. 2 for repairs and minor renovations. Call the MWR Entertainment Office at 243-5215 for more information.

High Rise Tower Housing Fire Evacuation Drills – As a life safety requirement of Fire Prevention Month, the CNFJ Regional Fire Department will be conducting annual high rise tower housing fire evacuation drills. Each drill will last approximately 20 minutes. During the drills, use the stairwells to evacuate, not the elevators. After evacuating, please go downstairs to the party room for a briefing. The location and drill schedules are as follows:

Yokosuka:

• Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. at Ichiban, Niban, Sanban, Yonban, Goban, Rokuban, Nanaban, Hachiban, Kyuban and Jyuban towers.

• Oct. 18, 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. at Bara, Ume, Himiwara, Asagao, Shobu, Tsubaki, Satsuki, Ajisai, Ayame, Fuji and Sakura heights.

Ikego:

• Oct. 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Seasonal Flu Vaccine – USNH Yokosuka will provide the seasonal influenza vaccine to all USNH beneficiaries Oct. 19 from 1 to 6 p.m. at Ikego Elementary School and Oct. 20 - 23 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Kinnick High School cafeteria. All beneficiaries are encouraged to attend and get the seasonal flu vaccine. Call USNH Yokosuka Preventive Medicine at 243-2608 for more information.

Navy College Office English Skills Class – Do you need to improve your English grammar and writing skills? The class will be held Oct. 19 - Nov. 6 from 8 to 11 a.m. Monday through Friday at the Fleet Recreation Center, 3rd floor, room 347. Register by e-mail to navycollege_yokosuka@fe.navy.mil or call 243-8131.