Sullivans Elementary School decks halls with holiday lessons

Sullivans School students Maddie Allen and Jackie Cloutier make fabric designs for Kwanzaa. Students at the school learned their lessons creatively this holiday season with music, dance, technology, culture, science and history.

Photo by Judith Goto

By Steve Parker,
The Sullivans Elementary School Public Affairs

Students at The Sullivans Elementary School are learning their lessons this holiday season with music, dance, technology, culture, science and history thrown in, thanks to the outstanding efforts of several creative teachers.

Linda Child's first-grade class presented "*Holidays around the World*" to support their social studies standards. The students presented a program for their parents that briefly introduced holidays in eight different countries using SmartBoard technology. The program also included traditional songs sung in English, Spanish and German. Following the program, the students shared "the gift of reading" with each other by bringing in wrapped books for one another to open.

An exceptionally magnificent holiday showcase took place courtesy of several Sullivans School second-grade teachers Dec. 9 where, most of the second grade and a large part of the multi-age classes rotated all day and learned about winter holidays around the world. The children experienced activities ranging from Kwanzaa and Chanukah to the Winter Solstice and Chinese New Year. They learned about winter holidays from Italy, Holland, India, Spain and Scotland.

Yvette Parker's storytelling presentation of the 13 Icelandic Trolls (with names like Spoon-Licker and Sausage-Swiper), who appear each of the 13 nights during the yuletide season leading up to Christmas Eve was particularly riveting for the children.

Jessica Lee's *obento* (boxed lunch) day, where her children and parents enjoyed an *obento*, was filled with savory delights. Students and parents had an opportunity to purchase an *obento* and enjoy it in the classroom. *Yaki udon* (stir fried noodles with vegetables and pork) and fried chicken was served.

"Delicious," Lee said. "It's a unique cultural experience that brings parents and students together."

Mike Applegate's fourth-grade students presented a play entitled "*Arthur's Christmas*" by Marc Brown. The play was performed in the multi-purpose room at the school and included acting, singing, comedy and dancing. The play was performed during three successive days for 30 different classes from the entire school. Parents were also invited to attend.

Yvette Parker and numerous parent volunteers escorted their classes into the community for a Christmas caroling trip which began at the Chapel of Hope and continued on to the George I. Purdy Fitness Center, Main Street Food Court, Nile C. Kinnick High School, DeCA commissary and ended at the Navy Exchange where the children enjoyed a brief respite from their canticles with hot chocolate from Dunkin Donuts.

Susan Davidson and Judith Goto's classes had an afternoon of Chanukah centers, playing dreidel, reading stories, making a menorah craft, and doing a science experiment to see how candles need oxygen to burn Dec. 2.

The season offered abundant learning opportunities for the students. The teachers used real life opportunities to extend the curriculum and holiday fun was enjoyed by everyone. Happy holiday wishes to you and yours from The Sullivans Elementary School.

Navy Operational Stress Control program increases awareness

By Lt. Jennifer Cragg, Emerging Media, Defense Media Activity

While high operational tempo and manning issues continue to remain in the forefront for deployed Sailors, the Navy Operational Stress Control program is having success in helping sailors and their families deal with related stresses, the program's coordinator recently said.

In a "DOD Live" bloggers roundtable, Capt. Lori Laraway discussed the program, its success in increasing awareness of operational stress, and the need to build psychological resilience.

"Feedback from our 2010 behavioral health quick poll, [a] Naval Personnel Command poll, other surveys and focus groups indicated growing awareness of the Navy's stress continuum model and the importance of leaders and individuals recognizing stress at work and home," Laraway said. "However, while awareness and stress issues are improving, this year's quick poll respondents also indicated that longer deployments and manning issues continue to contribute to increasing levels of their stress."

Laraway said the quick poll revealed a larger percentage of Sailors reporting positive ways they are coping with stress in their day-to-day lives. The survey indicated they are talking to family, friends, shipmates, counselors at Fleet and Family Support Center and chaplains, and they're using their chain of command to constructively solve problems.

While awareness of stress issues is improving, the Operational Stress Control program supports an aggressive education, training and communication campaign that integrates policies and initiatives under one overarching umbrella.

"Training has expanded this past year to include eight new e-learning courses designed for Navy leaders," Laraway said. "These Web-based offerings are part of the Navy's effort to embed Operational Stress Control program concepts across all education and training programs. This new curriculum builds on courses already taught to 176,000 sailors, family members and health care providers to navigate stress for day-to-day operations."

While the program is about helping commands, Sailors and families to become more resilient by increasing their ability to prepare for, recover from and adjust to life in the face of stress, adversity, trauma or tragedy, the expanded curriculum also helps families cope with stress.

"A mission-ready Sailor incorporates a mission-ready family," she said. "When things are going on in the home or in the family that are causing stress, it has an impact on the Sailor's ability to perform the mission."

Working with FFSC, Operational Stress Control program officials developed training and a formal curriculum tailored for families that would complement and support existing programs and have found other ways to get the vital information to family members.

"Our curriculum has been translated into Spanish and American sign language, recognizing that English is not only the primary language to get information out to families," she said.

Program officials also are working with the Navy Medicine Focus program to develop relationships with families who deploy more frequently. By doing so, Operational Stress Control training components can better define stress zones for sailors, Marines and their family members in the same, common language, which, according to Laraway, is vital to helping them understand those stress points.

"What we are teaching or presenting to Sailors and Marines is the same language that family members use here at the Fleet and Family Support Center," she said. "That common language is very important when looking to change our culture."

Operational Stress Control program officials have developed four color-coded categories to assist in classifying and recognizing stress: green indicates a "ready" status, yellow indicates a "reacting" status, orange indicates an "injured" status, and red indicates an "ill" status.

"We recognize that for the most part, our Sailors and families are in the green zone," Laraway said. "They are physically fit, they have had good training, they have good communication skills, [and] they know what to do and how to go about doing it."

Laraway added that if Sailors and their families facing difficulty have resilience and life experience, as well as the training and knowledge, they can move back into the green zone. Occasionally, something happens to shift the stress in the family, and it is perfectly normal to move across the continuum.

An important ingredient of the Operational Stress Control program's success, Laraway said, is increasing the acceptance of seeking help for stress-related injuries and illnesses.

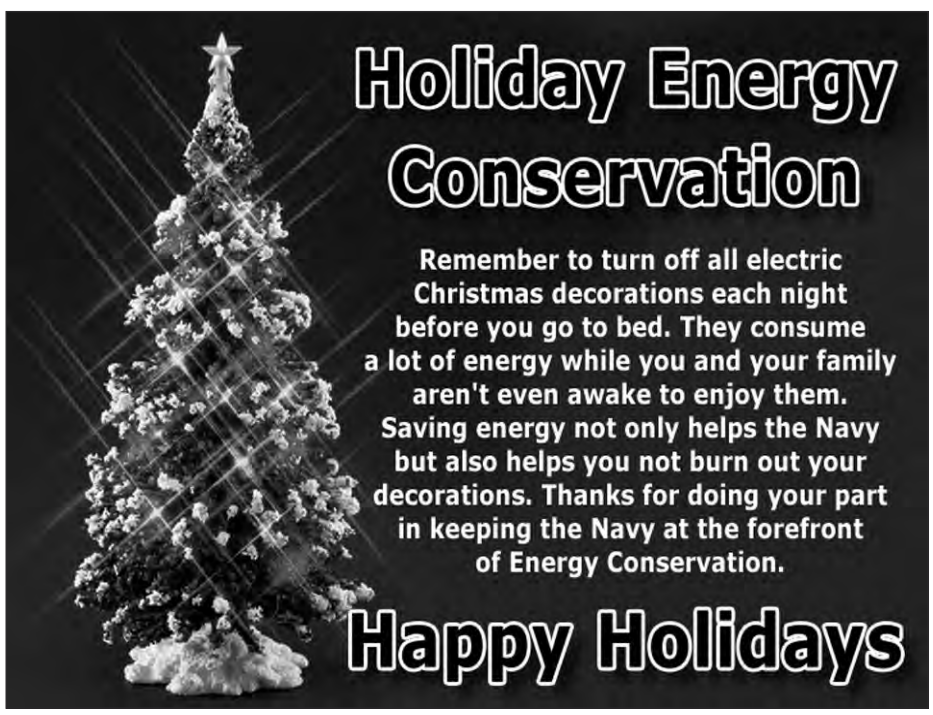
"Our work to change attitudes has begun with promoting Navy leadership's belief that asking for assistance and guidance is a sign of strength, and not weakness," she said.

Laraway added that they are dedicated to using humor as a method to teach leaders and Sailors to recognize their stress zones, and established a social media presence with their blog and Facebook accounts.

COOKIES, cont. from pg. 1

The USO volunteers also understand and appreciate the results of the work they do.

"It's important, because with little projects like this where we will hand out 3,000 bags of cookies throughout the base, and that's 3,000 people who otherwise might not have cookies made for them this year," said Rouse.

Without people caring enough to volunteer for USO, events like the Cookie Caravan would not be possible.

"The volunteers are what drive the organization," said Landis. "If it weren't for the volunteers, we wouldn't have the USO."