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Atsugi Functional Fitness Group Honors 31 Heroes

Nothing galvanizes the military community like losing brothers in arms. August 6 2011 thirty members of the U.S. Special Forces were killed in a helicopter crash in the worst loss of life in the Afghan war.

Almost one month later on September 3 2011, twenty-eight Atsugi military and spouses came together as part of NAF Atsugi's informal Functional Fitness group to complete the 31 Heroes Workout of the Day (WOD). According to the 31Heroes website, "On September 3, 2011 CrossFit gyms across the nation and world will gather together to honor our heroes killed in action August 6, 2011 with a workout in an effort to raise funds for the families affected by this tragedy. All funds received will go to these families through the Navy SEAL Foundation, other like-organizations, & individual family funds." The workout honors thirty U.S. military killed and one highly trained working dog.

Though not affiliated with CrossFit, the local functional fitness group according to Cindy Larson, who has her Master of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) and Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS), the exercise regimen "…shares many of the same methodologies and paradigms. We're just not an affiliate, but we [group leaders] are all CrossFit certified instructors."

Functional fitness according to Cindy Larson, "Really is a group personal training session but with more people. Fitness in general is defined in different ways. To us the ten aspects of fitness are speed, strength, endurance, flexibility, power, coordination, agility, stamina, balance and accuracy. We vary up the exercise routines to address all the aspects of fitness, not just one." The training sessions are held weekdays multiple times each day. "People who enjoy group aspect and are willing to push themselves and help others," says Larson. "This is teamwork oriented beyond just standing next to someone else in a group class. We care about each other, we've become like a little family."

"I like this for a lot of reasons, Ann Dohm describes, who is heading to Okinawa later this month to get the CrossFit Level 1 certification. "I am a competitive person so I

like the competitive aspect of it, so competing against myself and others too. I also like it because it holds me accountable; it's a set time everyday. I come I write my little score on the board. I like it because it works quite honestly. You see results really fast, you feel faster, stronger, leaner really quickly. The camaraderie too, I mean it's kinda like a social club in itself. It's just great all around."

The 31Heroes WOD, according to the email sent August 31, 2011 to registered participants "…sends an important message of support to the families of our fallen heroes. Your contributions will directly benefit each of the families who have been touched by this tragedy. Your response has been overwhelming. To-date, over 5,000 people have registered to compete in the event, which will be hosted at over 400 participating CrossFit Gyms. Together, we have raised over $200,000."

"Today it's a hero WOD," Jennifer Gautney whose husband is with VFA-27 and who has been working out with the group for two and a half months, said when asked why she came. "We celebrate heroes ever day but these were special guys." The local Atsugi group often executes what CrossFit calls Hero Workouts. The 61 current hero WODS, as listed on the CrossFit webpage are challenging standardized workouts to honor fallen military, police and fire personnel. The Daniel WOD named for Army Sergeant 1st Class Daniel Crabtree who was killed in Al Kut, Iraq June 8 2006 and the Murph WOD, which the Atsugi group completed as the last Hero WOD, is in memory of Lieutenant Michael Murphy, killed in Afghanistan June 28 2005.

Michelle McGrevy, who recently obtained the Level 1 CrossFit certification and has been working out with the group for almost 2 years, explained, "We do hero WODS all the time; we're part of the military community. Our brothers and sisters lost their lives. We do it for freedom and to help the families."

NAF Atsugi personnel joined others worldwide in the 31Heroes workout. The 31Heroes Facebook page displays posts from participants as far as in Australia, Hawaii and Iraq. Performed at the Halsey Gym, the 31-minute routine calls for one partner to run 400 meters with 45/25 pounds for (men/women respectively) while the other performs as many repetitions as possible of: 8 Thrusters, pressing a weighted barbell (155 pounds for men and 105 for women) from a squat position to overhead; 54 jumping towel pull-ups and 11 box jumps. The Atsugi group modified the original 31 Heroes WOD to

accommodate the large group and lack of equipment by creating 4 person teams to share the load.

The workout left Rachel Lopez, an Atsugi spouse like the other participants, tired and leaning on an upright weighted bar, “I wanted to give up so bad. It was very tiring. Everyone pushed me, whew, I can’t even talk.” After the equipment was policed she sat with her son, “This is the first time he’s actually come to see my workouts. They never knew, they had no idea til now.”

Dionna Glover, an Atsugi spouse, enjoys the challenge of the workouts enjoying it, “cuz it’s hard, it’s hard. You never know what you’re gonna do and I’m always surprising myself. Everybody pushes you, you don’t get that in regular cardio classes.”

Rachel Reagan, began working out with the group four months before her second pregnancy and continued until the day before giving birth. “I’m here because of a sense of empowerment that it gives you. Nothing like thinking there is something you can’t do then doing it. So, when I first started I thought, no way, I couldn’t do 100 squats, no way I could run a mile, but you just keep putting one foot in front of the other and then pretty soon you’ve finished it. And then you can say, you know what I did today, and that’s a great feeling.”

The training sessions are free for active duty and $35 per week for 3 workouts or $50 per week for 5 workouts. The group is participating in 2 more named workouts the next two Saturday’s in September, the September 11th WOD and Fight Gone Bad 6. Both are fundraisers like 31Heroes. Contact the Kanto Plain xfit-unctional fitness Facebook page or crossfitkantoplain.blogspot.com for more information. Also see 31Heroes.com for details of the event.