A fair fight

By Chaplain Allen Vaughan

According to the international law of armed conflict, military chaplains are non-combatants, which means that we are not allowed to bear arms on the battlefield. But, you might find it a bit surprising that chaplains are actually experts in teaching people how to fight. Specifically, we teach couples how to fight fair. The tactics we teach, however, don't involve hand-to-hand combat or weapons training… thankfully!

Now you might say, "Chaps, my spouse and I don't need to be taught how to fight. We have no problem doing that on our own." That may be true, but chaplains teach couples how to communicate with love and kindness, so that when you have an argument or a disagreement, you come away from the experience feeling as though you were heard and understood; as opposed to feeling attacked, that you lost the argument, or that you weren't heard.

A technique my wife and I have put to good use many times in our nineteen-year marriage is a method known as "drive-through talking." A simple example of this takes place when you go to your favorite fast food restaurant and order food at the drive-through window. As the customer, you place your order, trying to communicate clearly what it is you would like to eat. The restaurant employee, then, takes the order and repeats it over crackling and distorted speakers.

When you and your significant other have an argument, try this method of "drive-through talking," and see what a difference it can make. One person agrees to be the "customer" (the person who is doing the talking), and the other agrees to be the "employee" (the person who is listening very intently to understand what the customer is saying).

The rules for the "customer", or the speaker, are the following:

(1) Use "I" statements—share only your feelings or needs about the conflict;
(2) Avoid generalizations or attributing motives;
(3) Don't bring up past mistakes;
(4) Stay on one topic and share small amounts of information at a time;
(5) Take frequent pauses, allowing the person listening to repeat what they've heard.

The rules for the "employee", or the listener, are the following:

(1) Listen with 100 percent of your attention;
(2) Focus on understanding what your partner is trying to say;
(3) repeat what is being said by the speaker to ensure full understanding;
(4) Don't be defensive, edit, or rebut what you are hearing, even if you disagree;
(5) A helpful phrase to use might be, "What I hear you saying is…"

Be sure to switch roles, when you feel like you have been heard.

The key to fighting fair is not worrying about who is "winning" the argument, but rather on understanding where the other person is coming from, and knowing the heart of your partner more fully. "Drive-through" talking also helps your mate feel safe to express his or her needs and feelings, without fear of being misinterpreted or put down. When you do this, it enables you to work on solutions to conflict based upon mutual understanding, rather than who shouted the loudest, cried the most, or got in the last word. This is also a useful technique for parents to use when trying to resolve conflict with their children.

Check with your Chaplain or the Fleet and Family Support Center for relationship counseling or classes that can help enhance your communication skills with the people you love. Blessings!

Full-time support O6, O5 Retention/ Release Boards announced

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – The Navy announced the cancellation of the full-time support (FTS) commander selective early release from active duty (SERAD) board for fiscal year 2013 (FY-13) and the convening of the FY-13 FTS captain selective retention (SELRET) board via Navy Administrative Message (NAVADMIN) 191/12 June 25.

FTS commander inventory projections eliminated the need for an O-5 SERAD board, according to Lt. Cmdr. Kanan Ott, FTS officer community manager, Bureau of Naval Personnel.

The annual FTS captain SELRET board, scheduled to convene September 11, complies with the Navy policy requiring all FTS captains be continued by a board for service beyond three years time-in-grade.

The board is a force management measure designed to align FTS O-6 inventory with Navy end strength requirements, allow for reasonable promotion opportunities, and allow for the junior officer accessions needed to meet operational requirements.

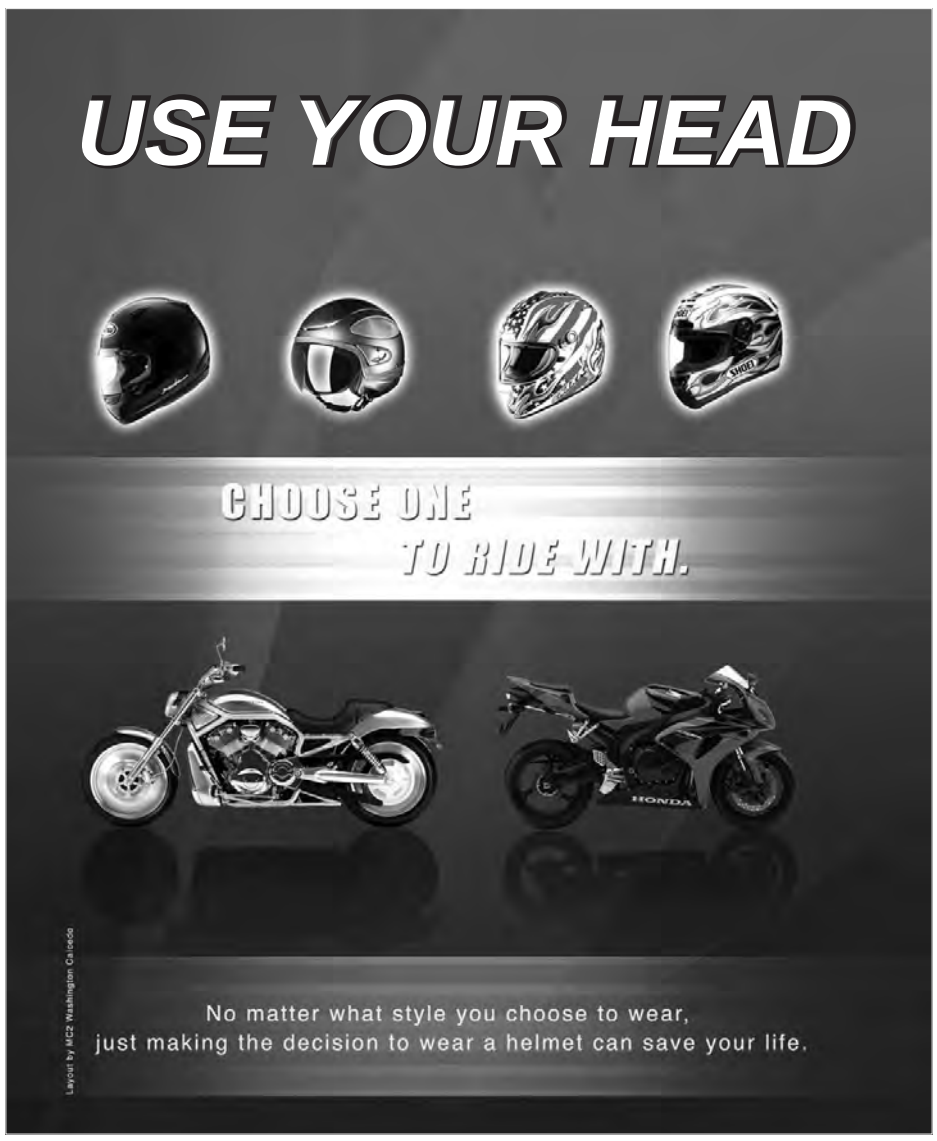
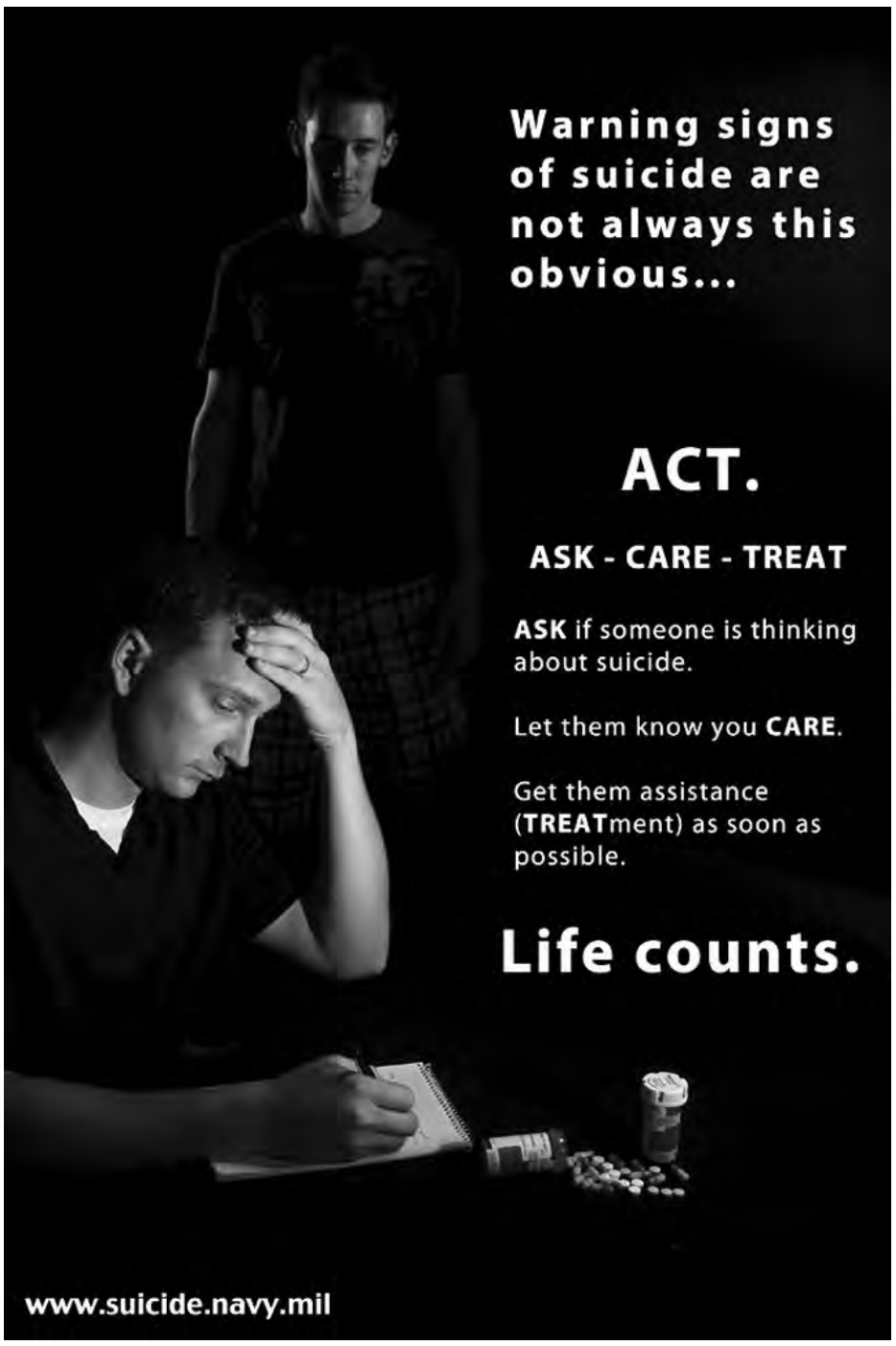
FTS captains who were promoted during FY-11 will be considered for continuation beyond three years time-in-grade (first-gate). Also considered for continuation are captains who were promoted in FY-08 (second-gate).

First-gate captains not continued must retire at three years time-in-grade while those not continued at the second gate must retire not later than the Sept. 1, 2013.

Captains selected for continuation beyond their second-gate can continue to serve until they reach 30 years of commissioned service or the statutory age limit, whichever is earlier.

Communication or correspondence with the captain SELRET board shall follow the same guidelines as with a standard promotion board. Captains needing additional reference information can visit the general information page on the Navy Personnel Command website at http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/boards/generalboardinfo/.

The Navy will formally notify captains not selected for retention once board proceedings are approved.

Developing information concerning the board will be posted on the Reserve personnel management and FTS community manager websites when available at http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/career/reservepersonnelmgmt or http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/officer/communitymanagers/reserve/fts.

For more information on the FTS commander SERAD or captain SELRET boards read NAVADMIN 191/12, or visit the above links.