Women focus of African American History Month celebration

Story and photo by Jeffrey C. Doepp, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Multicultural Heritage Committee celebrated National African-American History Month with a presentation held here at the Chapel of Hope Feb. 15.

The hour-long event focused on this year's theme "Black Women in American Culture and History," and featured historical readings, inspirational songs, poems, a dance performance and guest speaker.

The theme, chosen by the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History, urges all Americans to study and reflect on the value of African-American women's contributions to the nation.

"As courageous visionaries who led the fight to end slavery and tenacious activists who fought to expand basic civil rights to all Americans, African-American women have long served as champions of social and political change," stated President Barack Obama in his National African-American History Month proclamation Jan. 31. "From the literary giants who gave voice to their communities to the artists whose harmonies and brush strokes captured hardships and aspirations, African-American women have forever enriched our cultural heritage. Today, we stand on the shoulders of countless African-American women who shattered glass ceilings and advanced our common goals. In recognition of their legacy, let us honor their heroic and historic acts for years to come."

Guest speaker CMDCM Shellinda Miller, USNH Yokosuka command master chief, addresses the audience during the CFAY African American History Month celebration held at the Chapel of Hope Feb. 15. The hour-long event focused on this year's theme "Black Women in American Culture and History," and featured historical readings, inspirational songs, poems and a dance performance.

According to U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka Command Master Chief Shellinda Miller, who served as guest speaker for the event, this year's theme invites us to pay special attention and give tribute to the role that African-American women have played in shaping the character of our nation.

"In American culture today, many know of the accomplishments of a few prominent figures. From Phillis Weatley, the unlikely American patriot during the revolutionary war; Harriet Tubman, the leader of the Underground Railroad for slavery; and Ida B. Wells, one of my favorites, from the unyielding opponent of lynching to the mother of civil rights movement worlds apart - black women have been notable for standing against oppression, and still today we move forward. From Gwendolyn Brooks to Toni Morrison to Halle Berry to Whitney Houston, they have distinguished themselves as American laborers and in recent years they have been recognized as actors and recording artists with Academy Awards and the Grammys," Miller said.

"So, from the American Revolution to the present, African-American women have played many critical roles in the making of our great nation. As Black History Month 2012 is celebrated and hopefully appreciated by all Americans regardless of race, gender, sex, ethnic group, national origin, religion or creed, please remember that black history is Navy history and American history and soon to be world history," Miller added, concluding her speech.

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen, in his opening remarks spoke of Harvard-trained historian, Carter G. Woodson. Woodson, and the organization he founded, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, conceived Negro History Week in 1925.

"Today, three countries have an African-American History Month, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom," Owen said. "Woodson did not envision it becoming a monthly or month-long event. His vision was that it would go away altogether. Because what he wanted to see and people today like (actor) Morgan Freeman, is that African American history actually becomes part of American history instead of being separated. And it is true; it is a part of American history, but where I disagree with Woodson and Freeman is, I think we should keep it recognized separately, so we don't forget. We don't forget where we have been, how we got here and where we are now."

The CFAY African-American History Month celebration is just one of the many events presented by the CFAY Multicultural Heritage Committee throughout the year.

If you would like to participate in an upcoming event or desire more information, email to tasha.wright@fe.navy.mil.

Yokosuka Dental Clinic brings dental health to the Sullivans

Story and photo by Steve Parker, The Sullivans School Public Affairs

Sailors from the U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka (USNH) and *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Field Dental Clinic joined forces to bring dental health to students at The Sullivans School and other area schools during the month of February. This was a different type of sweet Valentine treat offered up to the children, the gift of healthy teeth and gums.

The month of February is traditionally Children's Dental Health Month. In addition to visiting the Sullivans School, the team of travelling dentists and Sailors plan on visiting Ikego Elementary School, Richard E. Byrd Elementary School in Negishi and the Child Development Center on Yokosuka.

According to Lt. Robert Stoner, division officer at the Fleet Dental Clinic USNH Yokosuka, the team of dentists will see close to 1,500 children over the course of their two week visits. They are "primarily looking for missed cavities and anything painful that may affect learning." stated Stoner.

During Children's Dental Health Month, the Fleet Dental Clinic also organized a poster contest for children. This year they awarded 21 children gift card prizes, donated by the Navy Exchange, as well as what Stoner describes as "Toothpaste Trophies, fabricated from a toothbrush, dental stone, dental mouth models and a can of spray paint to make it more fun for the kids."

During the week at The Sullivans School, classes came to the "B" lobby every twenty minutes with parent permission slips in hand. The children watched a presentation on proper tooth brushing techniques ably presented by Hospital Corpsmen Jesse Berry from Meridian, Mississippi with the aid of an outsize toothbrush and several brightly colored plush stuffed dinosaurs, two of which later starred in "Dudley and DeeDee in Nutritionland," a six minute instructional video on good dental health and nutrition released by the American Dental Association.

Hospital Corpsman Rebecca McKenna from USNH Yokosuka also told the children an engaging story about "Sugar Bugs who build homes in your teeth and these sugar bug homes are what we are looking for because they turn into cavities."

During the tooth brushing instruction, storytelling and video, children crossed over in teams of 2-4 to the inspection area where dentists carefully examined their mouths for evidence of cavities or "sugar bug homes." Results were annotated carefully for each child and potential problems were immediately noted down to inform parents to call the clinic for appointments.

Sullivans School Nurse Shawn Bogen noted, "This is a great way for children to learn about proper brushing and flossing techniques. It's good for them to be reminded often about how important dental health is."

Lt Rohit Davé, of *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) searches for cavities in the mouth of fifth-grade student Egypt Brown during the recent visit by a team of dentists for dental screenings at The Sullivans Elementary School.