CFAY spends a day at the ballpark

Story by MCSN Jordan T. Buttolph, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Capt. David A. Owen invited Sailors, family members and civilians assigned to various commands at CFAY to an alternate work location, March 30 as they attended a local professional baseball game.

Owen said making the Yokosuka Bay Stars game an alternate work location was sure to be a welcome event for Sailors and families of CFAY.

"I think they are going to appreciate it greatly because not only do they get the day off, but some of them probably have never been to a Japanese baseball game before so it's going to be something new for them," he said.

Owen threw out the first pitch of the game, which he said he was very excited about.

"I always fantasized about being a baseball player when I was growing up," he said. "The fact that I even got to step on the field makes me feel like a kid again."

Sailors and civilians were given a chance to participate in the fast pitch contest, which took place during the pre-game activities.

"It's a time to get together and have fun, knowing that we enjoy some of the same events like watching baseball," said Jeff Lindaman, CFAY Emergency Management Officer. "Being able to be a part of the fast pitch contest, and being able to participate as one of our host nation's guests is awesome."

Owen said that this is the second time that CFAY has participated in an event with the Yokosuka Bay Stars baseball team and he plans to do more events in the future like this one.

"I think events of this nature give us the opportunity to get out there in the community," said Owen. "We have a great relationship with the Yokosuka community and the more we share in events like this one only brings us closer together."

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Capt. David. A Owen throws out the opening pitch at a local Yokosuka Bay Stars baseball game at Yokosuka Stadium. Owen was joined by CFAY Sailors, civilians and family members at the game. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Declan Barnes

Comedian teaches Sailors, Marines real life lessons on alcohol abuse

By Jamie Chevalier, Seahawk Contributor

Comedian Bernie McGrenahan brought his Comedy is the Cure presentation to the Benny Decker Theater on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) March 23. McGrenahan, one of today's top stand-up comedians in America, spoke to Sailors and Marines about the dangers of alcohol abuse and his brother's suicide during the 90-minute program.

Comedian Bernie McGrenahan takes a picture of himself and one of his new fans after his Comedy is the Cure presentation at the Benny Decker Theater March 23. McGrenahan, one of today's top stand-up comedians in America, spoke to Sailors and Marines about the dangers of alcohol abuse during the 90-minute comedy show. Photo by Jeffrey C. Doepp

McGrenahan said he hopes his presentation will open the eyes of people who may have a problem with alcohol. He said many people use alcohol to cope with stresses of daily life and they do not want to admit that it has become a problem in their lives.

"I try to, through identification, take them through the mind of a problem drinker, so when I'm done, those that are drinking frequently will be able to identify and maybe walk out of here willing to make a change," he said.

Mcgrenahan opened the program by telling jokes about everything from Kim Kardashian to military commissaries. Once he had the audience's attention, the focus of the program shifted to his own story with alcohol abuse. He said the first time he got drunk was when he was in the eight grade, and that his drinking continued through high school and beyond.

"I was an 'A' student and baseball player my whole life, but when I got to high school my friends and I liked to drink," he told the audience.

He said they always tried to control it by saying "only on weekends" but that soon changed. By his senior year, McGrenahan said he was barely getting through high school.

"This 'A' student was getting 'Ds,'" he said.

McGrenahan lost his chance at a baseball scholarship but still went to college. But the drinking continued and he eventually ended up with three 'Driving Under the Influence' charges by the time he was 25. He spent six months in the Los Angeles County Jail.

"Do you know how many of my drinking buddies came to see me during those six months? None," he said.

Along with talking about his struggles with alcohol, McGrenahan spoke of his brother Scott's suicide. His brother also had a drug and alcohol problem. Scott shot himself in the family's backyard. McGrenehan used that story to ask the audience to think twice before turning to suicide when times get tough.

"If the Navy gets tough, you get depressed, you miss your family. Don't think about hurting yourself. We've lost too many Sailors and Marines to suicide. Talk to your CMC (command master chief), your chief's, or Fleet and Family Support Services," he said.

CFAY Chief Staff Officer Capt. Donna Kaspar said the combination of personal testimony and comedy helped keep the audience's attention.

"The relaxed style and appealing format provided a fresh and compelling approach in addressing some very serious subject matter," Kaspar said.

Gunner's Mate 2nd Class Katherine Curtis, from CFAY Legal, said she appreciated the way the program was presented.

"Sometimes stories from the heart are the best and as heartbreaking as it is, it also shows that no matter what happens you can always rise above it," Curtis said.

Chief Electronics Technician (SS) James Rose III, the CFAY Drug and Alcohol program advisor, said having this type of show is important for military members.

"Everyone is used to the standard Navy training that typically involves an hour or more of a presentation-style format that can bore you to tears," he said. "By providing a funny show that entertains and carries the Department of the Navy message was a great way to get Sailors to actually listen to that message," Rose said.

McGrenahan started the Happy Hour with a Message show in 1995. In 2007, the office of Chief of Naval Operations, out of Millington, Tenn., contacted him when they wanted a more creative and innovative way to present the issues of high-risk drinking to service members.

"They wanted to bring fresh, creative training approaches that Sailors not only pay attention to, but enjoy as well as learn from. And I hope I've done that for the Sailors here," McGrenahan said. "I appreciate our men and women in uniform and I don't take my freedom for granted. I want to thank them all for their service."