George Washington promotes personal, professional development

By MC3 Stephanie Smith,
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

The aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*), forward-deployed to Yokosuka, Japan, took on an extra role as the Navy's largest floating classroom June 7.

"I want Sailors to have a better understanding of their job. It's an important part of this ship's mission readiness," said *GW* Executive Officer Capt. Kenneth Reynard, when speaking of one of the ship's newest programs - 3M Power Hour.

Introduced during a routine maintenance period, 3M Power Hour kick-starts a Sailor's day by offering both in-rate and professional Navy training. The hour-long class is held twice each week and covers the maintenance and material management aboard ship. Sailors gain the ability to confidently perform maintenance throughout the ship as well as a general knowledge of how the ship's systems and fittings function.

3M Power Hour is a "win-win" for the ship and her crew while another program, School of the Ship, is a little more one-sided in the Sailor's favor, helping Sailors further their individual careers in the Navy.

"I can't give you a pay raise, but I can give you time to study and get ready for your advancement exams," said *GW* Command Master Chief Martin King. "We owe it to our Sailors to help them succeed."

Lead by senior enlisted Sailors, School of the Ship is held once a week. The one-hour class covers different topics specific to that Sailor's rate. *GW* leadership is hoping the program will result in higher advancement numbers.

"It's not only important that Sailors have a strong understanding of their rate, which School of the Ship offers, but we also want Sailors to have the opportunity to receive test taking tips and on hand knowledge from the E7 and above in their rate," said Reynard.

(Left) ICFN Michael Colonna and IC3 Anthony King, check for voltage on an aircraft carrier elevator bell buzzer circuit during a dock trial aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*). *GW* leadership introduced 3M Power Hour, an hour-long class held twice-a-week, which offers Sailors both in-rate and professional Navy training that covers the maintenance and material management aboard the ship.
U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Cheng S. Yang

School of the Ship isn't the only program onboard to help Sailors make the most of their Navy career. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) improvement course helps those who initially did not do well on the test.

The ASVAB is an aptitude battery that measures an individual's abilities and helps predict their future academic and occupational success in the military.

"The ASVAB improvement course has been very successful," said Master Chief Navy Counselor Oscar Feaster. "These classes are designed to widen the scope of opportunity for Sailors on board, whether it's through their naval career or their future outside of the Navy. The ASVAB improvement course opens up more rates to Sailors who want to cross-rate and also qualifies those who want to stay in their rate to make rank more quickly."

More than 30 *GW* Sailors have taken the ASVAB prep class with 28 earning a higher score their second time around. That doesn't just give those Sailors additional options, it could also keep them employed. With the current performance initiatives, Sailors need to qualify for as many rates as possible should they need to cross rate in order to continue their Navy career.

"The ASVAB class really helped me out," said Airman apprentice Felicia Watters. "I wanted to make sure I had as many choices and opportunities as possible with my career in the Navy. I needed to improve my score for that to happen."

As the aircraft carrier begins powering up for its summer patrol, it appears aboard *GW*, education is already full steam ahead.

Ferguson talks about balanced force with personnel leadership

By MC1(AW) LaTunya Howard, Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. - Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson met with Navy personnel leadership to discuss force balance and the upcoming Enlisted Retention Board (ERB), which convenes Aug. 22.

CNP Vice Adm. Mark E. Ferguson, addresses attendees at the National Surface Navy Association Symposium. Ferguson met with Navy personnel leadership to discuss force balance and the upcoming ERB, which convenes Aug. 22.
Photo by Joseph P. Cirone

The chief of naval personnel (CNP) began his briefing by commending the officers, enlisted detailers, enlisted community managers and Navy Personnel Command support personnel for their diligence and hard work this year. He also noted that current over manning in certain enlisted ratings was not just a Navy concern.

"The fiscal pressures we are under, and the projected transition period of moving out of Iraq and Afghanistan are affecting all the services," said Ferguson. "Each service is taking a slightly different approach to manning."

Navy policies and programs work optimally under a retention rate of 55-60 percent. The Navy is currently operating at 71 percent retention. "We have more people wanting to stay in the Navy than we presently have billets," said Ferguson.

Overages in the Navy's end strength drove the decision to conduct the ERB, commencing in August. Four years ago, the opposite was the norm with the Navy competing to keep skilled Sailors in the service.

"We saw our retention numbers turn in 2008, so we took actions over time to get ahead of this trend. For example, we expanded Perform-to-Serve in 2009, which allowed us to start shaping the force. For officers, we are trying to prevent over manning this year, so we are conducting a selective early retirement board. We are presently projected to be overmanned in commanders and captains in the unrestricted line," said Ferguson. "On the enlisted side, we are operating at sustained high retention levels unprecedented in the history of the all-volunteer force."

CNP allowed time for questions from detailers and community managers. He expressed a desire to know what manning issues they encounter, and welcomed their suggestions.

"This issue of balance is a tough one," said Ferguson. "Each of you play a crucial role in manning the Navy and shaping our future. You wrestle with that balance of an individuals needs, the command's needs and the needs of the Navy."