# Celebrating Independence Day: birthday of America

**By Jeffrey C. Doepp, CFAY Public Affairs**

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka will hold an Independence Day celebration July 4 from 3 to 7 p.m.

This event, in a country-fair setting, will include kids zone activities, carnival games and air toys, petting zoo, boat rides, sports, food booths and a youth bike parade and ice cream social. To top off the celebration, a rock concert featuring the recording group Bowling for Soup will perform at 7 p.m. in the bowling alley parking lot.

Independence Day honors the birthday of the United States of America and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776. It is a day of picnics, barbecues and patriotic parades, a night of concerts and fireworks, and the proud flying of the American flag.

According to the website USA.gov, the Declaration of Independence, which was drafted by Thomas Jefferson between June 11 and June 28, 1776, is the nation's most cherished symbol of liberty and Jefferson's most enduring monument. In unforgettable phrases, Jefferson expressed the convictions that were in the minds and hearts of the American people.

President Barack Obama, in his speech given on the Blue Room Balcony during an Independence Day celebration at the White House July 4, 2010, spoke of the inspiration, essence and spirit that has defined the American people as a nation for more than two centuries.

"And on this day that is uniquely American, we're reminded that our Declaration, our example, made us a beacon to the world, not only inspiring people to demand their own freedom - from Latin America to Africa, from Europe to Asia - but even now, in this time, these ideals still light the world," Obama said.

In the pre-Revolutionary years, colonists held annual celebrations of the king of England's birthday, which traditionally included the ringing of bells, bonfires, processions and speech making. In contrast, during the summer of 1776 some colonists celebrated the birth of independence by holding *mock* funerals for King George III, as a way of symbolizing the end of the monarchy's hold on America and the triumph of liberty. Festivities usually accompanied the first public readings of the Declaration, beginning immediately after its adoption.

Philadelphia held the first annual commemoration of independence on July 4, 1777. Gen. George Washington issued double rations of rum to all his soldiers to mark the anniversary of independence in 1778, and in 1781, Massachusetts became the first state to make July 4 an official state holiday. However, observing Independence Day only became commonplace after the War of 1812.

After the Revolutionary War, Americans continued to commemorate Independence Day every year in celebrations that allowed emerging political leaders, of the new nation, to address citizens and create a feeling of unity. By the last decade of the 18th century, the two major political parties, the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, that had arisen, began holding separate Independence Day celebrations in many large cities.

**Cody Ruth chomps on some cotton candy during the CFAY Independence Day Celebration July 4. More than 11,000 people joined in the festivities around Kosano Park last year to celebrate America's 234th birthday.**

**Photo by Dan Bowen**

The tradition of patriotic celebration became even more widespread after the War of 1812, in which the United States again faced Great Britain. In 1870, Congress made July 4 a federal holiday; in 1941, the provision was expanded to grant a paid holiday to all federal employees. Over the years, the political importance of the holiday would decline, but Independence Day remained an important national holiday and a symbol of patriotism.

Since the late 19th century, the Fourth of July has become a major focus of leisure activities and an occasion for family get-togethers, part of our "unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

# Power of One project helps put history in perspective

**Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs**

Nile C. Kinnick High School, on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, recently held its first Power of One Conference for its 10th-grade honors students in the school's Little Theater.

The conference was the culmination of the Power of One project, which was headed by Kinnick Literature Teacher Alex Mauldin and History Teacher Andrea Schindler, and involved months of study about, and immersion in, each students' choice of an influential character from history.

However, one of the mandatory elements was the figure must have a biography.

"I noticed that a lot of my classmates were choosing good guys and my teacher suggested that I choose someone who is not so good," said Kinnick Student Alexus Graddic. "At first I chose Saddam Hussein, but I couldn't really see the impact of what he did, so then I chose Adolph Hitler."

During the conference students made presentations and had debates from their characters' points of view.

The all-day conference, which is part of the Power of One project and took place between November and May, began with video presentations.

"The students created videos with other students, like a skit, they made mock TV shows, things like that," said Schindler.

**Nile C. Kinnick High School students participate in a debate during a Power of One conference held in the school theater May 27.**

After the video presentations they moved on to panel discussions, with the historical figures divided in to groups such as conquerors and influential women.

During the panels, students, who were in costume and character, discussed topics such as what defines greatness; how are people remembered through history from their contributions and how their historical figures had a lasting impact on the world.

Throughout the day, students were voted on by their peers and at the end of the day three finalists were selected.

The students went through various stages of research for their historical figures and projects involved in the Power of One project counted toward 30 percent of their history and literature grades.

Though the project required a lot of effort from the students some really enjoy it.

"Doing the actual research is kind of hard, but when you pick a person that you are actually interested in, it gets fun," said Graddic. "Then when you get here to present your information, you try to prove you are the best and it makes you really competitive and you really want to 'sell' your person. So, it's a really fun experience."

C.J. Cole, who chose Jesus Christ as his historical figure agreed with Graddic that it was a good experience. "I thought it was pretty fun," said Cole. "I'm glad it was really organized and that we got to do it."