I do!

By Chaplain William Stewart

It was a day like none other. Joe and Judy had known each other basically all of their lives and were even high school sweethearts. Everyone in the school knew without a doubt that they were a match made in heaven. And so, it all culminated on this very special day, Joe watching his lovely bride walk down the aisle and given away by her father who was having a difficult time holding back the tears as he put her hand in Joe's hand. Daddy's little girl had grown up, and she was beautiful.

The minister asked, "Joe, do you take Judy to be thy wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Do you promise to love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her, so long as you both shall live?" Joe had been brought up to believe that men should not ever show deep emotions in public, but when he heard those words and then looked deeply into Judy's beautiful brown eyes, a tear rolled down his face as he smiled and proudly said, "I do."

The ceremony concluded that day with all of the fanfare for a happy newlywed couple and the honeymoon was just as spectacular. As the years went by, the reality and challenges of life set in. After quickly having two children, the incredible memories of that honeymoon and special day soon faded as their family grew. As the stresses of life grew greater and greater, the fairy tale once dreamed of by both of them was gradually replaced by something that had gone terribly wrong.

Joe sat on the cold, hard chair in front of the table, all alone. The room was comfortable enough, but, he was not. He was nervous and confused. It was then that a man and woman walked in and sat across the table from Joe. They were holding a manila envelope and placed it on the table. The man spoke first and said, "Joe, we are here for one reason. We need to find out the truth. I need you to be as honest as you can with some questions. Joe, do you hurt Judy?"

It wasn't evident whether Joe could not speak or would not speak, but the silence in that room became very loud. It was then that the woman pulled out pictures from the manila envelope and laid them on the table in front of Joe. Joe's glare at the ceiling slowly moved down to the pictures laying there on the table as the man began to speak once more. "Joe, do you beat your wife? Do you hit her and kick her? Do you hold her down and humiliate her until she begs you to stop or until she can no longer speak? And when your little boy stands between you and her, crying and screaming, 'Daddy, please don't hurt Mommy,' do you then proceed to hurt him too?" Once again, silence.

Like on that wedding day only a few years before, he gazed into the eyes of Judy, this time in the picture. The very same eyes, but this time surrounded by cuts and bruises, and with a distinct look of sadness and shame. Once again, a tear rolled down Joe's face as he softly replied this time, "I do."

The same two people, the same two words, "I do." The question most people would ask is, "What went wrong?" What could have changed so drastically where a person who promised to love and take care of someone for the rest of his life, turned from loving to abusive? I would like to tell you that this story about Joe and Judy is not based on reality. I would love to tell you that this type of story is rare. But it's not. Some reports say that an act of domestic violence occurs about every 15 seconds in the United States.

Although October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, this is not an issue limited to any month, nor is it a respecter of age, social status, gender or ethnicity. It is everyone's problem and it needs to be everyone's concern. We need to continually bring this issue to our community's attention, because we know that ignoring it, will not make it go away. My faith tells me to love thy neighbor as thy self and to do unto others as I would like to be treated. We have an opportunity to live out this kind of faith by looking out for one another.

If you or someone you know is trapped in the destructive cycle of domestic violence, please seek help by contacting one of the many resources; a chaplain, a family victim advocate, an ombudsman or your chain of command. May we all bond together as a community and as a family, to face this challenge in our society. And, when someone asks if you do everything within your power to help those in need, you can proudly say, "I do!"

Heads Up Yokosuka

Community Announcements

Base Movie Theater Closure – The Benny Decker Theater will be closed from now to Dec. 2 for repairs and minor renovations. Call 243-5215 for more information.

Fire Hydrant Flow Testing – Annual fire hydrant flow testing will be conducted in Yokosuka Nov. 16 - 25. Hydrant testing can cause household water discoloration. If you notice discoloration, let the tap run for a few moments to clear. Please do not park in the vacinity of hydrants and remain clear of the area when testing is in progress. Call 243-4619 for more information.

Federal Employee Health Benefits Briefing – Representatives of the American Foreign Service Protective Association will hold Federal Employee Open Season Briefings Nov. 9 at the CNFJ Human Resources Office Training Room in building 1472. Two one-hour briefings will be held at 10:30 a.m. and at noon. To reserve a spot in the briefing or for more information, contact HRO Labor/Employee Relations and Services Eiko Norinaga at 243-8184 or by e-mail to eiko.norinaga.ja@fe.navy.mil.

Navy College Office (NCO) Tuition Assistance (TA) – NCO TA/Electronic TA (ETA) Briefs are conducted on the first and third Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. Command TA/ETA Briefs are provided for groups of eight or more at your location. Contact NCO at 243-8131 or by e-mail to navycollege_yokosuka@fe.navy.mil for more information.