FISC Yokosuka Marines kick off martial arts program

Story and photos by Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka Marines recently kicked their Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) into full swing. MCMAP is designed to increase combat efficiency and to also teach non-lethal techniques to be used during humanitarian efforts or during security patrols.

A combination of martial arts such as, Taekwondo, Aikido, Karate and Jujitsu are found within the training manual. During classes, students learn to be confident with the techniques and to defend themselves, while exercising their muscles and increasing cardio endurance.

Though initiated in 2004, rapid rotation and mission responsibilities delayed the full implementation of the MCMAP at FISC Yokosuka.

FISC MCMAP Instructor Gunnery Sgt. Maurice Williams originally participated in the program as a student in 2003 at Parris Island Drill Instructor School and later attended instructor training school at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

"I feel honored to be an instructor at FISC because when I first got here we did not have an instructor and could not sustain our qualifications," said Williams. "MCMAP is really important because it is mandatory for individuals to be qualified up to the first belt-tan belt. This fits into our training with gas mask training, rifle training and physical fitness."

The FISC MCMAP, which meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, is open to all Marines on Yokosuka Naval Base. Maintaining current skill level is essential to the successful execution of MCMAP techniques in real-life situations.

"I want my students to know the techniques, be able to apply them and be comfortable because if you do have to use them you don't do them in steps like in the book, it's muscle memory. That's why we do sustainment so they don't forget," he said. "These techniques are being used daily and around the world. Deploying and even humanitarian relief efforts bring with them the possibility of hostile locals or locals who may misunderstand because of a language barrier and you need to keep them from hurting yourself or themselves."

(Left) SK2 Man Yin Chan practices a blocking maneuver with Staff Sgt. Elton Yu while supervised by green belt instructor Gunnery Sgt. Maurice Williams during a female self-defense class Feb. 24. Navy service members may join the class to enhance their self-defense skills.

Sgt. Ato Waithe of FISC Yokosuka is currently working towards his green belt in MCMAP.

"I look forward to getting better," said Waithe. "If I'm in a real life situation I will know what to do and I won't hesitate and I will be able to get the best of the enemy instead of them getting the best of me."

The MCMAP not only sharpens a Marine's combat skills, it also provides stress relief and camaraderie building opportunities.

"I have done this before; so, this is a refresher course," said Gunnery Sgt. Jackie Lindsey, from Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command. "I am here to refine my martial arts skills. It gets the blood pumping, gets you out of the office and you get to learn potentially lifesaving techniques."

(Center) Maj. David Brown practices a takedown maneuver with Sgt. Ato Waithe while participating in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program Feb. 24. The program is open to all Marines on Yokosuka Naval Base and allows them to sustain and advance their current skill levels.

"Sometimes in the office we have a long day and we want to get out," said Williams. "Being warriors, we're always a little aggressive so we'll get out on the mat and test our skills and techniques. It gives us the chance to build camaraderie, use the techniques in more than just a classroom setting and allows the students to become the teachers."

FISC Yokosuka's MCMAP is also open to Navy service members who want to enhance their self-defense skills. Storekeeper 2nd Class Man Yin Chan participates in a female test class recently started by Williams.

"Thanks to Gunnery Sgt. Williams and Staff Sgt. Yu, we are able to come out and learn self-defense. I think it's awesome to learn self-defense and for me to learn takedown techniques that I could use on a big guy," said Chan. "I have always wanted to do it but haven't had the chance until now. I want to learn the skills to be able to defend myself if something unfortunately did happen."

Storekeeper 2nd Class Scott Frederick practiced martial arts before joining the Navy.

"The Marine martial arts program gives me a good chance to extend my repertoire," said Frederick. "The best part is the camaraderie."

Williams, who practices Aikido in his spare time, encourages others to participate in one of the many forms of martial arts offered locally.

"Yokosuka Naval Base has a lot of martial arts instructors. I encourage military and civilians to take advantage of this opportunity, especially because some (of the martial arts offered on base) originated here in Japan," said Williams.

African-American heritage, diversity celebrated at FISC Yokosuka

By Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

A diverse audience gathered at the U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka patio Feb. 26, to recognize the achievements and reflect on the history of African-Americans, during FISC's annual African–American History Celebration organized by the FISC African-American Heritage Committee.

FISC Yokosuka Commanding Officer Captain Mike Arnold began the celebration by speaking to the audience about the pride he feels for his command and the integral part diversity plays in accomplishing the mission of FISC Yokosuka.

"We're all extremely fortunate to have this opportunity to come together as a team, not just to celebrate African-American heritage but to also celebrate our great diversity throughout the FISC Yokosuka enterprise," said Arnold. "I am proud to say we are a present day model of worldwide diversity, cooperation and shared cultures."

Arnold also spoke about the progress made throughout America regarding the acceptance of people of different races and the historical significance of the election of the first African-American president of the United States.

"It is our special honor to recognize those in our workforce of African-American heritage and the historically significant achievements of all African-American citizens of the United States," he said. "Of course, we've come a long way. Through historically recognized struggles and tribulations, this is a day when it is a widely known and celebrated fact that an African-American has been popularly and electorally elected to the office of President of the United States of America."

Arnold concluded his speech by praising the benefits of a culturally diverse workplace.

"Diversity grants us immeasurably valuable benefits in teamwork, partnership and cross-cultural sharing. It has opened doors and allowed us to take advantage of the mutual benefits of multicultural thinking, decision making and problem solving. It is especially gratifying to be joined by our Japanese employee community here for this significant cultural recognition event," said Arnold.

(Left) Dionne Lynch, Janice Thibodeaux and Sherri Thomas, of the Christian Ministries Far East Trio, sing a gospel medley during FISC's annual African–American History Celebration Feb. 26.

Photo by Yohsuke Onda

The event also featured a gospel medley by the Christian Ministries Far East Trio, a tribute to the first African-American Navy Cross Recipient, Petty Officer 3rd Class Doris Miller and guest speaker Information Systems Technician Master Chief (SW/AW) Shellinda A. Miller.

Miller currently serves as the command master chief at the Center for Naval Leadership Learning Site Yokosuka and is a member of the Yokosuka Diversity Empowerment Committee. Miller's speech focused on this year's theme, "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas," and narrated the journey from the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, to the inauguration of President Barack Obama in 2009. She stressed the importance of constant cultural education and the power of diversity.

"I am a proponent and a very strong advocate of diversity," said Miller. "There's so much history and there is no way we could ever cover it all in 28 days, 29 if it is a leap year. So, I think it is quite important that we do continually educate ourselves and each other. You can never move forward if you don't know where those who have led you have been," said Miller.