MWR Fit 4 Fun program teaches youths about fitness, health

By Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Department Youth Sports kicked off its winter Fit 4 Fun session at the George I. Purdy Fitness Center Jan. 20.

"The purpose of the Fit 4 Fun program is to teach kids about fitness, about wellness and health. It's a program that's designed to educate them in all the different aspects of fitness whether it be working out, whether it be eating right or things like that," said CFAY MWR Youth Sports and Fitness Coordinator Brandon Bergeron.

"It used to be called the 'Personal Training and Fitness program,' and that's a pretty easy way to describe it, but what we are trying to do is give kids a chance to participate in fitness," he said.

The program was started about five years ago. Prior to that, MWR didn't have this type of program.

"We had a lot of sports programs, but nothing that really focused on the fitness aspect," Bergeron said.

Although the first day only included basic fitness assessments and orientation, classes will go more in depth once the participants know what to expect.

"We're going to do a wide range of fitness activities," said Bergeron. "We're going to cover things from basic cardio; how to use [machine weights]; basic lifting and how to use the weight room, select the right weights and develop a program that's good for them."

The program can also cover individual goals, and sports-specific training if needed.

"So, if a kid comes to me and tells me he really wants to get stronger for football, we're going to develop a little bit of a program for him," he said. "We're also going to help kids who just want to get into better shape. We take the kids that we have and we really focus on them and making a program for them."

The eight-week program is held four times a year. Classes are held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3 to 4:30 p.m. and open to kids who are 12-18 years old. However, each quarterly session is limited to a maximum of 10 kids per class due to safety reasons. Because, according to Bergeron, keeping the class limited to 10 participants makes the classes more manageable for the staff to monitor.

"Whether you are trying to get into shape, lose weight, train for a sport, or just spend an hour and a half every few days doing something active, this program is for you," he said.

For more information about the Fit 4 Fun program contact the MWR Youth Sports Department at 241-2952.

(Right) MWR Youth Sports and Fitness Coordinator Brandon Bergeron monitors Fit 4 Fun participants during a cardio evaluation in the martial arts and cardio room at the George I. Purdy Fitness Center Jan. 20. Photo by Ben Avey

Stroller Boot Camp takes different approach to group workouts

Story and photo by MC3 Devon Dow, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

For Sailors and their family members interested in getting in shape, the Fitness and Wellness program at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Purdy Fitness Center has a health club that can benefit the entire family.

Stroller Boot Camp is a free running club that meets three days a week and focuses on getting members in shape through cardio exercises and incorporating their children into the routine of staying fit.

"This club offers a variety of drills that focus on strength, power, agility, balance, cardio and core," said Maraiah Herrera, fitness instructor for Stroller Boot Camp. Another key benefit from the club is the camaraderie of the participants in our community, while getting in a high intensity full-body workout."

The club runs various distances and on trails throughout the base. After each run, the parents meet at the Purdy Fitness Center and do various stretching exercises and give the children a chance to be active themselves. While the club does promote family members with children, everyone is invited to join the club, according to Herrera.

"My advice for new people who would like to join the club is to not be afraid of running long distances," she said. "They should realize that they are not running alone, they are running with either somebody on their own skill level, or someone that is going to stay with them the entire way."

Karla Soto, whose husband is stationed aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), said that it was the Stroller Boot Camp program that got her back in shape after her pregnancy. She said she highly recommends the club for family members of Sailors who want an outlet and to grow within the Yokosuka community.

"If you're new here and want to meet new people, this club is a great way to do that," she said. "If you've been here for a while, it's a good way to get out of the house and let your kids socialize too. I think sometimes people are intimidated, but when you try it you see that everyone takes care of each other here, whether you are the fastest one or not, somebody is going to be there to help you out."

When George Herrera, a retired U.S. Marine Corps major joined the club two years ago, he did not know a single person on the base, but now the club has become more like a family to him. He said when he first arrived in Yokosuka, his daughter was one year old and now is best friends with all of the children in the group.

"Before you know it, they'll be going to school together," he said. "I urge people to come out and be a friend; it is camaraderie and a great experience. Anyone can run alone, if that was the case we wouldn't be in the group, it's all about helping each other and being a friend. This is a way for us to stay fit, and include our children in this."

Members of Yokosuka's Stroller Boot Camp, a fitness club that promotes running and a healthy lifestyle, cool down in front of Purdy Fitness Center after their morning run Jan. 15. The club meets three times a week and welcomes any parent with a stroller who is interested in becoming a better runner and staying in shape.

Ikego Firefly Fitness Group lifts off

By MCSN Mike Mulcare, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

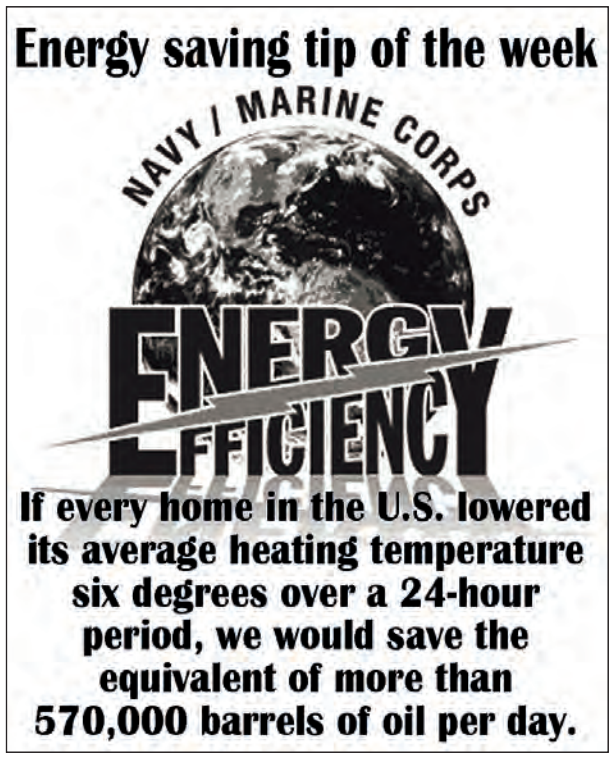
Ikego Elementary School kicked off the New Year with the inaugural meeting of the Firefly Running Club on Jan. 4. The after-school athletic group for students and parents is led by teachers Jenny Stonebarger and Mary McCartney, who aspire to teach children healthy exercise habits and proper nutrition.

Healthy exercise habits and proper nutrition help children fight childhood obesity, which has doubled in the past 20 years according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Web site.

The Firefly Running Club meets weekly and is open to any student and parent looking to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

"I'm hoping it sticks with them as a positive experience and it's something they will grow to love more and more and bring home to their families," said Mary McCartney, a 1st-grade teacher.

During the club's first meeting, members discussed the importance of life-long fitness and how to attain this goal. The students, parents and teachers warmed up with light stretching before participating in a 1.3 mile jog and brisk walk, where they alternated between running (for 60 seconds) and walking (for 90 seconds) until the 1.3 mile goal was accomplished.

"I think that good fitness habits generally start at home for most children," said Jenny Stonebarger. "Being children of military members has its definite benefits over non-military children. The children have at least one parent who must pass a fitness test so they get to grow up with a positive fitness role model."

The Firefly Running Club is currently training for a scheduled 5k run at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka March 20.