Career advancement MyCAA resumes for enrolled spouses

By Elaine Wilson,
American Forces Press Service

The Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts program, commonly known as MyCAA, resumed March 13 for the more than 136,000 spouses who already have established an account, the defense official who heads up the program announced March 11.

Officials announced a temporary halt in the program Feb. 18, pending a top-to-bottom review, after a six-fold spike in enrollments in January, a surge that overwhelmed the system and caused the program to nearly reach its budget threshold.

"We made a commitment to our military spouses when they established a career advancement account, and we will be true to our promises," said Tommy T. Thomas, deputy undersecretary of defense for the Pentagon's Office of Military Community and Family Policy. "We sincerely apologize to our military spouses for the added burden caused by the pause in operation."

While the program will resume for enrolled spouses, new MyCAA accounts or financial assistance applications will not be accepted yet, Thomas said, noting that the comprehensive review of the program still is under way.

"We are working hard to adjust the program to meet the demands of the MyCAA program and to arrive at a long-term solution for military spouses who would like to establish an account," he said. "Until that time, we encourage spouses to consult with the MyCAA career counselors who can provide career exploration, assessment, employment readiness and career search assistance."

The review includes procedures, financial assistance documents and the overall program, which is intended to provide military spouses with opportunities to pursue portable careers in high-demand, high-growth occupations.

The program has been growing in popularity since its inception March 2, 2009. Enrollments had been increasing at a rate of about 10,000 a month, and in January, the number spiked to 70,000.

(Left) Navy College volunteer Traci Gabriel and Education Technician Cynthia Cross look over the MyCAA fact sheet at the Navy College Office located in the Fleet Recreation Center. The MyCAA program resumed March 13 for enrolled spouses after a top-to-bottom review caused the program to be halted temporarily. Photo by Dan Bowen

"We had very little time to react to that," said Thomas. "I make no excuses for that. We should have done a better job of notifying our military spouses."

Thomas said he will work hard to restore the confidence lost when the program was halted.

"We certainly know we have lost some confidence, and we want to rebuild that confidence," he said. "We will restore that faith hopefully by one, restoring the program, and two, having appropriate resources to ensure everyone that applies for the program receives the appropriate financial assistance.

Thomas said he will ensure the lines of communication stay open in the days ahead. An e-mail has been sent to all program participants, informing them of the program's resumption, and spouses will see the announcement letter when they log on to their MyCAA accounts. A "media blitz" of information will precede any announcement that applies to all military spouses, he vowed.

"We don't want to make the mistake we made in the beginning, and that is not notifying you what's going on," Thomas said. "We want to make absolutely sure that you understand that we're working in your best interest."

In the meantime, Thomas urged spouses to be wary of questionable Web sites enticing them with employment opportunities.

"Stay the course with us and allow us to work this to finality by restoring the program," he said. "We will make every effort possible to ensure we educate you and get the necessary funds to continue this program."

CNO recognizes CFAY environmental program with top award

By Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Representatives of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) will travel to Washington D.C. to accept the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Environmental Award for Natural Resource Conservation June 1.

According to the press release issued by CNO Environmental Readiness Division, the CNO Environmental Awards competition recognizes ships, installations and people who are exceptional environmental stewards.

In addition to winning the Natural Resource Conservation Award, CFAY was recognized for five additional categories including: cultural resources management, environmental quality, sustainability, environmental restoration and environmental excellence in weapon system acquisition.

CFAY Environmental Compliance Branch Chief Lily Mow credits the award to the work of the environmentally conscious community who have taken part in command programs throughout the year.

"We won the natural resources award collectively due to the robust support of eco-volunteers, installation and tenant command leadership, military and civilian personnel, residents, host nation cities of Yokosuka, Zushi and Yokohama, expertise from the Yokosuka City Museum and base environmental staff members," said Mow. "Without the support and commitment of both the U.S. and Japanese communities, we would not be able to protect and preserve our fragile environment."

CFAY boasts a wide array of programs that strive to promote the long term health of the environment both on land and at sea.

For example, a 2009 earth day event brought 150 children together to plant a native species of eel grass in the bay. The eel grass served as a spawning and nursing haven for more than 400 Flounder Fish that students later released. They type of flounder released has seen declining numbers in Tokyo Bay in recent years.

In other situations, CFAY took the initiative to protect native species through the alteration of base facilities. In 2008, CFAY installed bright solar powered street lights in an area that was found to be a mating area for native fireflies. Concerned that the lights may inhibit light based firefly mating signals, CFAY replaced the bright lights with low illumination light bulbs. This action ensured that the area was safely lit for local families while avoiding unnecessary environmental interference.

In the coming year, the Environmental Division has a number of new programs slated to continue advancing the installations commitment to environmental stewardship and educate local residents about how they can help.

For those who would like to "go green" and help the local community, CFAY has partnered with Navy Exchange and the City of Yokosuka to clean up base monuments and clean trash out of Green Bay marina April 24. They are seeking volunteers of all abilities including scuba divers. For more information or to volunteer, contact the CFAY Environmental Division at 243-6592.

Annual road tax, 2010 vehicle decal issuance

Editor's note: This community announcement, which previously appeared in the March 12 Seahawk, incorrectly stated that road tax would be collected at the Fleet Theater on March 24. We appologize for the error. The correct dates are shown below:

Annual road tax for your vehicle is paid every spring. Payments, which must be made in yen, can be made at the Kanagawa Tax Office for regular sized cars and trucks. Payments for motorcycles and mini-cars can be made at the local city office, starting April 1. In accordance with U.S. Forces Japan Policy Letter, vehicles are to be registered at the closest military installation to where vehicles owners are assigned.

Road tax will be collected at the Fleet Theater, March 23, 25 and 26 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 2:30 p.m. and April 12 and 13 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 2:30 p.m. This service on board Yokosuka is also intended for Ikego residents. Road tax collection for vehicles registered in Negishi will be at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation classroom, Bldg. 19045, in Negishi Housing April 15 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

The amount of road tax to be paid depends on the type of vehicle, which can be determined by the number shown on the top of the license plate and is as follows:

• 40/400 Y and 50/500Y plates	7,500 yen
• 33/300 Y plates 4.5L and below	19,000 yen
4.6L and above	22,000 yen
• 11/100 Y plates	32,000 yen

Vehicle owners can check to see if their documents are up-to-date by looking at the Motor Vehicle Registration Report, which should be in each vehicle registration package. This report lists all the expiration dates of your paperwork.

Base decals must be affixed to the top center of the front windshield, next to the Japanese inspection sticker. The current Japanese inspection sticker, current base decal, installation sticker and rank decals (if applicable) should be the only decals affixed to the windshield. All other decals and inspection stickers from the previous years must be removed. Contact the Vehicle Registration Office at 243-5011/5896 for more information.