Weighing idealism, reality in face of tragedy

By Chaplain Jack Carver

In his painting "School of Athens," the famous artist Rafael captures the body language of Plato and Aristotle as they engage in conversation. He presents Plato gesturing with his finger pointing toward the sky, as he promotes the importance of idealistic thinking, suggesting humanity benefits by continually focusing upon the higher ways. Aristotle is also speaking, but he is gesturing with the palm of his hand facing the ground, suggesting it is healthier for humanity to be grounded with reality when considering pursuits of life.

Space does not permit me to endorse either school of thought. On certain occasions, I have overcome complacency, raising my horizons through Plato's theme of idealistic thinking. As a result, I developed stronger relationships with my family, reached career milestones and furthered my education. On other occasions, I have overcome perfectionism and unrealistic expectations of myself, grounding myself with Aristotle's concepts of realism. As a result, I developed stronger relationships with my family, reached career milestones, and furthered my education.

The need to balance these concepts is underscored in times of tragedy. On Veterans Day, I watched the memorial service for the victims of the recent shooting that occurred at Fort Hood, Texas. We all have felt affected by the tragic news of this mass-shooting which happened on one of our homeland military installations. Feelings of shock and vulnerability have been expressed time and again since official reports of this incident were released.

For those of the Christian faith, tragedy represents a crossroads in which the ideal intersects with reality. Christians pursue the ideal ("…seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all its righteousness…." Matthew 6:33), in a real world they are "in" but not "of." We find it hard to escape the question, "Where is God in this?"

An Army chaplain, along with other officials, who spoke at the service, touched the hearts of a nationally televised viewing audience with words of consolation in honor of the lives which have been lost. Ideally, we'd never expect to attend a memorial service for decent, caring, healthy, professional people whose lives ended in such a tragic way, in what is supposed to be such a safe place. The messages of the memorial service speakers culminated in the reminder of the reality at hand; that is, we must resume the mission. Once again, the resiliency of the American spirit is called upon to anchor our determination to ensure that every American can enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As we embark upon another holiday season, my heart aches for each one of the loved ones who were connected in some way to these shooting victims. This will be their first holiday season without their loved ones who were lost in the rampage. You and I share a connection with the families and victims of the Fort Hood shootings with higher ideas of freedom for all and that all should share the dream of prosperity. We also share in the reality of living in a world affected by the humanity's worst. Again, we are left to work out in our own way how to resolve this tension between idealism and reality.

Heads Up Yokosuka

Community Announcements

Fire Hydrant Flow Testing – Annual fire hydrant flow testing will be conducted in Yokosuka from now through Nov. 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.

Child and Youth Programs (CYP) Fine Arts Exhibit – A CYP Fine Arts Exhibit will be held Dec. 4 from 5 to 6 p.m. at the Yokosuka Youth Club (formerly the Yokosuka Teen Center), building 1257. The exhibit will showcase a variety of artwork created by CYP members in ages 9 to 18 years. An art contest will also be held with a winner from each age group selected by a panel of judges for each project category. The entire CFAY community is invited to attend and see the artwork of our youth displayed in real art exhibit fashion. Contact the MWR CYP Coordinator Lee Leach at 241-4100 or by e-mail to lee.leach@fe.navy.mil for more information or to volunteer as a judge for the art contest.

The Yokosuka Semper Fi Society Toys for Tots Campaign – The Yokosuka Semper Fi Society is collecting new, unwrapped toys for children in local group homes, hospitals, single-parent military families in Yokosuka and orphanages in surrounding countries. Donation boxes are currently located at the Navy Exchange in Yokosuka, Ikego and Negishi. Fundraising barbecues and commemorative Toys for Tots coin sales will also be held this holiday season in the commissary red brick area. The last day to donate is Dec. 20. The Semper Fi Society's goal is to collect 2,000 toys. Contact Sgt. Ato Waithe at 243-6303 for more information.

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 the Navy College Office at 243-8131 or by e-mail to navycollege_yokosuka@fe.navy.mil for more information.

Seahawk Community Announcements and Article/photo Submissions – Deadline for community announcements and article/photo submissions for the Seahawk is the Friday before the next Seahawk edition. E-mail your submissions to Seahawk-Umitaka@fe.navy.mil. Please include your telephone contact information in the body of the e-mail. Contact the Seahawk editor at Seahawk-Umitaka@fe.navy.mil or call 243-2567/3003 for specific submission requirements or for or more information.

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

NSPS Reconsideration Process: Requests for reconsideration

By Lisa D. Marsh,
CNFJ Human Resources Office

After completion of the pay pool process, the mandatory Annual Appraisal conversation takes place. The rating official conducts the meeting and provides employees with results including the final rating of record, number of shares and performance-based payout distribution.

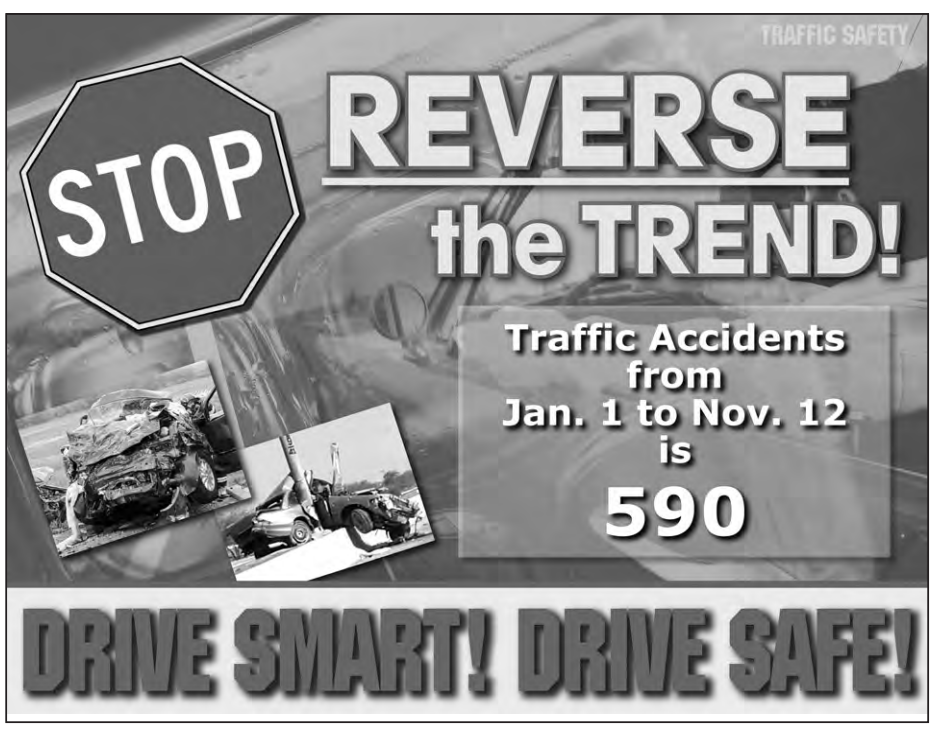
An employee may challenge an individual job objective rating or the rating of record. The performance payout, number of performance shares assigned, value of performance shares and distribution of payout between increase to base salary and bonus are not subject to the reconsideration process. Citation SC1940.13.1 contains the timeframes and procedures for the reconsideration of rating process. The following describes the process steps:

• The employee has 10 calendar days from the day he or she receives his or her rating of record to file a written request for reconsideration with the pay pool manager. The employee must send a copy of the request and the evaluation to the rating official and servicing human resource office. The request must explain the reason for the request and the desired outcome.

• The pay pool manager has 15 days to make a decision. During this time, the pay pool manager may invite the rating official and the employee to speak about the reconsideration.

• If the employee is still dissatisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal the decision to the Performance Review Authority (PRA) within five calendar days of receipt of the decision, or five calendar days from when the decision should have been given. The PRA has up to an additional 15 days to make a decision. The decision of the PRA is final.

Performance ratings may remain the same or increase as a result of the reconsideration process; however, ratings may not decrease. The employee's signature on the performance appraisal does not indicate agreement but only receipt of the information. Signing the document does not preclude filing for a reconsideration of rating. The reconsideration process may not be used for interim reviews or closeout assessments, or for a rating official's recommended rating of record.

If an employee receives a National Security Personnel System (NSPS) rating that he or she believes is based on their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicapping conditions or reprisal for participating in a previous Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint, they have 45 calendar days from the receipt of the rating or 45 calendar days from receipt of a decision on a reconsideration request to contact an EEO counselor to initiate an informal EEO complaint. Failure to initiate the complaint within the 45 days could result in the dismissal of the complaint for being untimely in accordance with 29 CFR 1614.107(a)(2). As always, questions should be directed to the CNFJ Human Resources Office (HRO) Yokosuka EEO Office at 243-8163/9579/7092.

Additionally, the Department of the Navy Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program has worked with the Office of Civilian Human Resources to develop an ADR process that is simple, quick and consistent with NSPS reconsideration rules. The process, "Facilitated Discussion," uses a neutral to help employees clearly present the facts that the employee wants the pay pool manager to consider. Facilitated discussion helps pay pool managers by ensuring that their questions are answered and that they have the relevant facts necessary to make informed decisions. Under this process, the pay pool manager still makes the decision, but the facilitator helps the parties make their discussion more effective. For more information contact the CNFJ ADR program manager at 243-9579.