New Laugh Laugh Japanese class helps you learn the language

Story and photo by Joseph Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Can you ask where the train station is in Japanese? Or, can you ask your new Japanese neighbors a few questions about themselves? Even if you can, the new Japanese language class "Laugh Laugh Japanese," at the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) can still teach you more.

The course was started as Laugh Laugh English and was meant to teach English to the Japanese. FFSC Class Coordinator Bob Long, brought the course to FFSC and some of the students from the English class became the teachers of Laugh Laugh Japanese.

"I learned Laugh Laugh English (LLE) in Oppama and was asked to teach Japanese.," said Eri Kageyama, one of the new teachers. "I learned LLE for seven years, so I was asked to teach Japanese using the same method as I learned English."

The class is called Laugh Laugh Japanese because the teachers try to be funny and have fun with the students. Long said the class uses a new teaching technique that works with the less -structured environment.

"The method we use is story asking. It's a relatively new process but it's been incredibly successful," said Long. "People that relocate to Japan and have very little or no experience with Japanese can start speaking in a relatively short amount of time."

Story asking involves the students creating a character and a narrative, then using them to learn Japanese.

"We were making our super hero (character) that was pretty enjoyable," said LTJG Larry Ungar, one of the students. "We created what we are actually going to be learning and put the learning in our own hands versus some sort of canned teaching.

FFSC Class Coordinator Bob Long and class instructor Eri Kageyama, encourage students to try speaking Japanese for the first time during Laugh Laugh Japanese, a new Japanese language class offered twice a month on Saturdays at FFSC. The class differs from more structured courses because it doesn't require perfect attendance and uses "story asking" as a new teaching method.

Ungar, like other Sailors, may get underway or have duty on one of the class days, but the class is designed and setup to accommodate students that have demanding work schedules.

"We review previous classes, so even if you are on deployment, when you come back, you can get right back into class instead of saying 'Oh I missed a bunch so I can't go there again,'" said Ungar. "But, you are learning different stuff each time so if you are on deployment for a few months or weeks, it's still a great place to come."

Laugh Laugh Japanese isn't limited to just Sailors, family members are also welcome to attend the classes.

"I think that some people think that Japanese might be too hard or too scary to learn, but I think that the Japanese would appreciate any attempts Americans can make to speak their language," said Alex Kosmider, a spouse of an active duty Sailor. "I don't think people understand how much it can mean when you connect with people from the host country."

Laugh Laugh Japanese is offered twice a month on Saturday morning. To find out more about the class or any of the other programs FFSC offers, call 243-9631.

FFSC Million Dollar Sailor course delivers wealth of knowledge

Story and photo by MC3 Dominique Pineiro, CNFJ Public Affairs

In an effort to establish better saving habits to prepare for their financial future, Sailors aboard Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) took advantage of a training opportunity designed to increase financial awareness at CFAY Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) Dec. 6-7.

Dubbed the Million Dollar Sailor course, the two-day program covers 10 different modules designed to help educate Sailors on how to navigate through various financial hurdles, such as how to become a smart consumer, managing debt, credit management and retirement planning.

"My job is to give Sailors the most up-to-date information to help them reach their financial goals," said Michael J. Spiltener, a financial counselor at FFSC. "The better you manage your money, the more options you have, the more options you have, comes more financial freedom. We try to make the information relevant to the Sailors' daily life and help them make sound decisions."

Operations Specialist 2nd Class Mike Damon, assigned to Fleet Coordinating Group, echoed Spiltener's sentiment, saying the information the class provides is pertinent, especially for Sailors separating from the service.

"When I get out of the Navy, my life choices are drastically different," said Damon. "In order to maintain my current lifestyle, it's important to know what my options are and my main focus right now is to better invest my money."

Splitener says one of the biggest problems he sees is Sailors not having a proper spending plan.

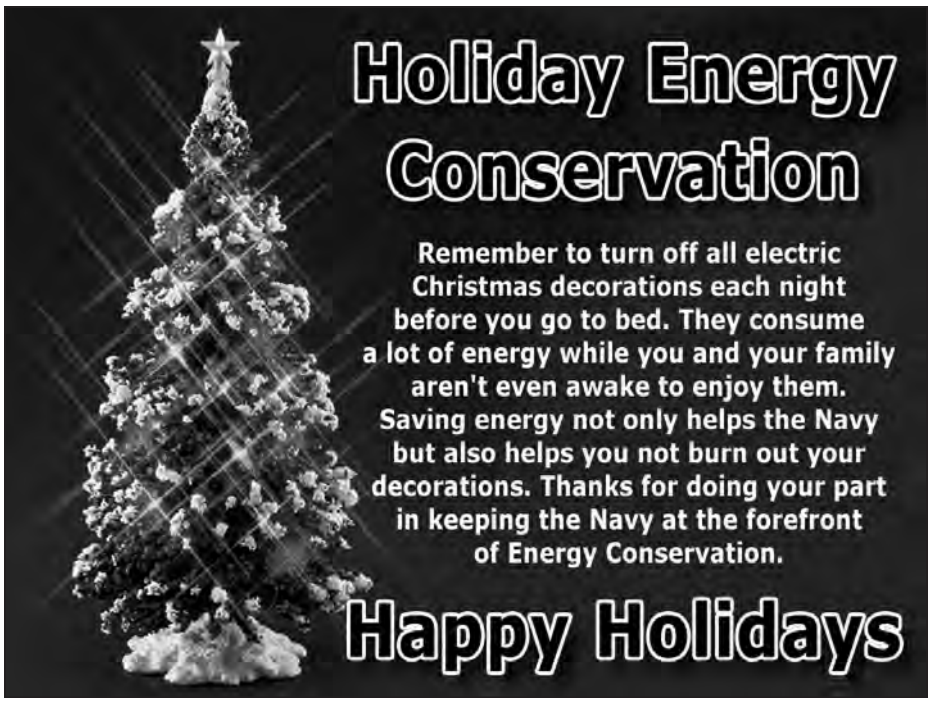
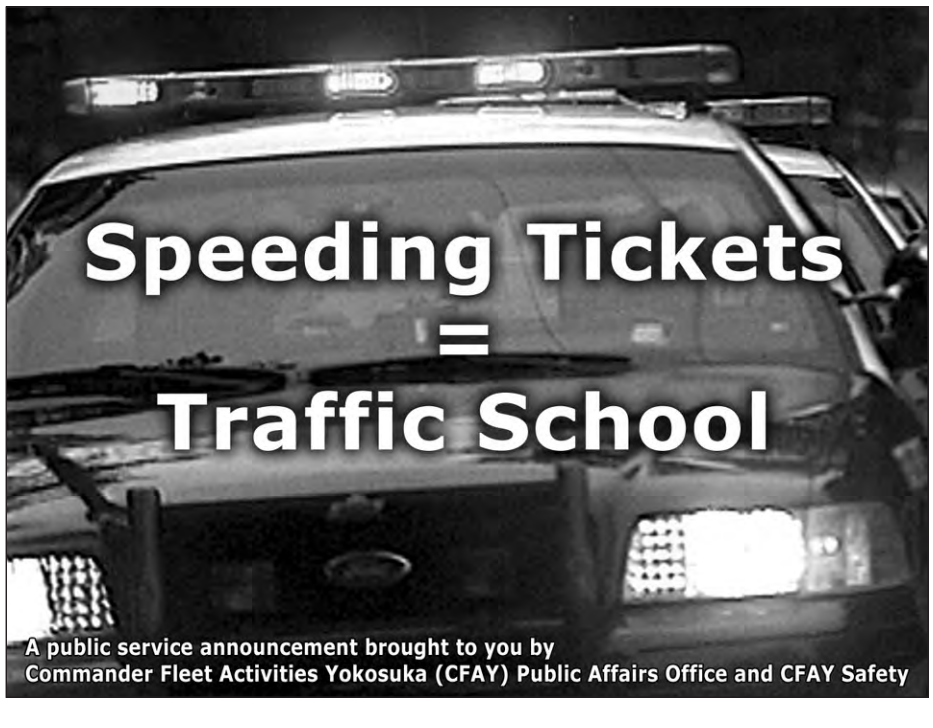
"A lot of times when a Sailor gets paid, he checks the balance in his bank account and sees if he has $500. He thinks to himself 'I've got $500 to spend.' The goal of this class is to help them build wealth so they can reach their individual financial goals," Splitener said.

Navy Diver 2nd Class Joel Pengra, assigned to Ship Repair Facility – Japan Regional Maintenance Center, said the course was extremely beneficial in helping him establish a spending plan.

"In Japan you get away from a lot of stuff like house buying and car buying," said Pengra. "So you can forget what to look for. Taking a class like this helps me gain knowledge on managing my money and helps me prepare for when I get back to the states when I buy my car."

While the class is geared specifically towards the military member, it's open to everyone, including spouses.

"Usually the spouses are the ones who control the finances while the service member is deployed, TAD (Temporary Additional Duty) or on an [individual augmentee assignment], so the spouses need the information so they can start building wealth while the service member is away," said Spiltener.

The Million Dollar Sailor course is offered quarterly at FFSC. For more information about FFSC or the Million Dollar Sailor course, visit https://www.cnic.navy.mil/Yokosuka/CommunitySupport/FFSC/index.htm.

(Right) Michael J. Spiltener, a financial counselor at FFSC, helps MA2 Johnnie Harris fill out a financial planning worksheet during the Million Dollar Sailor course Dec. 6. The Million Dollar Sailor course is a two-day program that covers 10 different modules designed to help educate Sailors on how to navigate through various financial hurdles.