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Navy enlightens students

NAS Jax Sailors participate in career day at local elementary school

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A group of Sailors from VP-30, Navy Entomology Center for Excellence (NECE) and Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit 202 (CBMU 202) participated in a career day event for fifth-graders at Hyde Park Elementary School May 26.

Static displays were set up in several different classrooms and outside on the school grounds allowing the students to rotate through and learn about the different career opportunities the Navy has to offer.

In one classroom, a team of women aviators from VP-30 interacted with the students, talking about what they do every day at the squadron and showed them some of their aviator gear.

"Growing up in Pensacola, I used to watch the planes flying over and really wanted to become a pilot. So, after graduating from college with a degree in biomedical engineering, I joined the Navy to become a pilot with a back-up plan to become a doctor if I didn't make it or like flight school. But I got into flight school and really enjoyed it," said Lt. Melissa Moravan, a pilot/instructor at VP-30.

"After all my flight training, I was assigned to VP-16 and did deployments to Iraq and Japan. When I was in Japan, we participated in an exchange program with the Japanese Navy and I got to go to an airfield that hadn't had any American personnel since World War II," she continued telling the class.

"We were the first aircrew that got to go back there and I was the first female officer who has ever been there. I felt like a celebrity because everyone was taking my photo. It was really neat because we got to meet some Japanese aviators who also fly the P-3."

VP-30 Naval Flight Officer Lt. Janine Curcio and PR2(AW) Dinia Cadette also participated in the career day.

"I work on the survival equipment for the aircrew. It may not seem that exciting, but my job is to make sure all the gear is working properly in case they need it so they can come back safe," explained Cadette.

She then showed the students an aviator's survival vest and what it contains and a helmet.

Fifth-grade teacher Ellen Mendendez was thrilled that the Sailors took time out of their busy schedules to talk to her class.

"I think this is a great opportunity for the students. It gives them a chance to see the different careers out there and what they need to do to get to it," she said.

The event was coordinated by NAS Jax School Liason Officer Dawn Mills. "The school contacted me and asked if there were any commands who might have some Sailors who could come out and explain their jobs for career day. So I put the word out and the base responded. We could have brought a lot more Sailors but we had time constraints," stated Mills.

In another classroom, HM1(SW/FMF) Robyn Murillo of NECE discussed how her command helps military members out in the field protecting them from vectors and brought a couple critters to let the students get up close and personal. Many were a bit squeamish about handling Peaches the cornsnake and a Madagascar hissing cockroach.

Outside, Seabees from CBMU-202 talked about their jobs and displayed some heavy equipment.

"Our unit deploys all over the world. We specialize in building bridges, runways, streets, power generators and can turn sea water into fresh water. We do it all," explained BU1(SCW) Douglas Bennett. "Our Sailors have many different jobs from equipment operators to utility workers."

Bennett also stressed the importance of getting an education. "How many of you love math?" he asked the students. "When I was in school, I hated math, but now that is all I do every day. So the key is to do well in math and reading. I really appreciate my mom for staying on me and making sure I stayed in school. Education is important. In my job, we have to get our college degrees and take exams to get promoted so I'm still going to school and studying."

"I love to travel and really appreciate what the military has done for me. I've been all over the world and love going places," he continued.

"Another thing I love about the Seabees is that it's a close community. You meet friends for life and you can always count on them."

After a short safety briefing, the students were allowed to climb in the vehicles to learn how they operate.

"It's amazing how interactive the kids get to be during this event. It's something they don't get in their classrooms – it's hands on. We are so grateful to the Sailors for coming to our school today," said Hyde Grove Elementary School Guidance Counselor Virginia Conte.

As for the students, they were thrilled to learn what the Sailors do and to interact with them.

"It was really cool to learn how the trucks and equipment work and to talk to the Sailors," said fifth-grader Derrick Jones.

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