

DEFYing the odds

Staying drug free: A youth-based program building positive, productive citizens

BY CRYSTAL BROWN-VOELTZ

The Naval Consolidated Brig at Joint Base Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina, became an affiliate chapter with the South Carolina Correctional Association (SCCA) in November 2017 under the command of Cmdr. Carl Brobst. In December, the chapter's president, Dr. Crystal Brown-Voeltz, announced that the chapter's first initiative would be the Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) program. Since that time, the staff worked hard to "defy" the odds by getting the program up and running through attending national training in Millington, Tennessee, and the recruitment of parents, children and volunteer mentors.

DEFY was established in 1993 by the Navy's Drug Demand Reduction Task Force. The program is geared toward teaching military and Department of Defense (DOD) children about various topics, including

substance abuse, bullying and gang culture, while providing them with alternative activities and positive life skills. DEFY is a year-long program designed for 9-12 year olds that kicks off with either a five-day residential or eight-day non-residential attendance at a summer leadership camp, with the brig providing the latter. During this time, a science-based curriculum provides the platform for youth to learn important skills such as physical fitness and general social skills, as well as team building, self-management and drug resistance skills. There is also a blending of classroom time with outdoors activities such as swimming, basketball and other team sports to make the experience fun and rewarding and to promote physical fitness.

When the summer leadership camp ends, the mentoring continues throughout the school year and children participate in monthly meetings with adult

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volunteers. Time is spent on additional curriculum topics, such as study skills, conflict resolution, gang resistance, personal safety, internet safety and bullying, as well as a skills-refresher training, continued emphasis on physical fitness and providing important mentoring.

"DEFY is designed to promote a healthy lifestyle and increase a child's ability to avoid peer pressure," according to Tech. Sgt. Kristi Lapeyrouse, operations coordinator of the Naval Brig's DEFY program.

DEFY is sponsored by local commands with the mission to improve combat readiness by providing a drug demand reduction and comprehensive life skills program specifically designed to improve youth resiliency and

For more information

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http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/21st_Century_Sailor/DDD/DEFY/Pages/default.aspx

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strength. DEFY's goal is to empower military and DOD children to build positive, healthy lifestyles as drug-free, productive citizens. Parents understand that the DEFY program requires a year-long commitment to allow for the full benefit to their children. The nationwide program is free to participants and sponsored by the DOD.

The 2018 summer camp ended with 15 children in attendance along with 23 volunteer mentors. The children participated in daily mentoring and two field trips. The year-long mentoring began in September.



Photo provided by Crystal Brown-Voeltz

Opposite page: istock/Vectorios2016

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