

JBPHH kicks off HealthyBase Initiative

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Ho'okele Staff



Ben, one, and Ryen, 22 months, play together during the kick-off event of the Healthy Base Initiative at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

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Getting fit and having fun was the theme for the day as more than 1,000 service members, family members and Department of Defense (DoD) civilians learned about habits for good health and fitness when Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) launched its Healthy Base Initiative event Oct. 18 at Ward Field.

JBPHH is one of 14 DoD bases, one of only two Navy bases and the only joint base, selected as sites for DoD's "Healthy Base Initiative (HBI)" campaign to promote good health across the nation.

HBI is a demonstration project that examines select military installations' efforts to support improved nutritional choices, increased physical activity, obesity reduction, and decreased tobacco use.

The free event at JBPHH focused on new and ongoing programs to help people make healthy choices. The family activity offered fitness demonstrations and workouts, nutrition and fitness guides and tips, and body fat measurements. But there were also bounce houses, adult obstacle courses and live music from the U.S. Pacific Fleet Band to round out the entertainment.

“I think it’s really important that we instill this healthy lifestyle in our children, especially with so many schools cutting out physical education and limiting recess,” said Mariah Tatla, mother of a two-year-old girl.

Attendees at the event also had the opportunity to get moving during the Zumba demonstration with a combination of dance and workout routines. “I think it’s very important that we get the younger kids out here and playing recreational sports or running around, especially because this society and generation is the video game era,” said Master-at-Arms 3rd Class Abrel Smith, president of the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam chapter of Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD).

The Healthy Base Initiative is part of Operation Live Well, the DoD program that supports the National Prevention Strategy of improving Americans’ health and well-being through a prevention-oriented approach.

Operation Live Well aims to make healthy living the easy choice and the social norm across the Department of Defense.

According to statistics provided by DoD, obesity and tobacco use among U.S. military health care beneficiaries add more than \$3 million per year to the DoD budget in health care costs and lost duty days. Today, more than one-third of adult Americans are obese, and a fourth of potential new recruits are unqualified due to their weight.

Capt. Jeffrey James, commanding officer of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, noted that the Healthy Base Initiative could also be called the Common Sense Initiative.

“It aligns what we already know about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle (good nutrition, regular exercise, no tobacco use) with more formal resiliency programs, such as the 21st Century Sailor, to help inform sound decision-making across a broad spectrum of subjects ranging from design of streets, sidewalks and crosswalks to food options on base, to fitness programs offered to service members and their families,” James said.

At the HBI launch, fresh fruits and vegetables were available for purchase at a farmers’ market.

Representatives at various booths provided information on healthy living, including mental health, responsible alcohol use, and the negative effects of tobacco.

The Healthy Base Initiative project was launched in 2013 to encourage a healthy and fit alternative to the



Zumba instructors lead participants in a demonstration which included a combination of dance and workout routines as part of the kick-off event for the Healthy Base Initiative.

trend toward obesity and tobacco use. The project promotes a healthy and fit force, which is essential to national security.

It provides a hands-on look at service-level innovations, which can be used to promote healthy and wellness best practices throughout DoD.

“Health and fitness programs help our service members hone a combat-ready force. These programs – including the new Healthy Base Initiative here – are already helping Wounded Warriors, family members, DOD civilians, retirees and other members of our team get and stay healthy,” said Rear Adm. Rick Williams, commander of Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific.

The goal of the Healthy Base Initiative is to make the healthy choice the easy choice. This could include such activities as walking to meetings, eating a salad for lunch instead of an extra large cheeseburger, and taking the first steps toward making the healthy choice the easy choice.

The initiative focuses not only on the active duty service member but all individuals who live and work on joint base. Proponents of the program point out that “a healthy family will make for a healthy service member.”

“This holistic approach is especially applicable to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, as we recently completed a master development plan for the base that incorporates many healthy lifestyle features, such as a more walkable/bikeable campus feel to the base, not to mention the fact that we have a climate that supports year-round healthy outdoor activities,” James said.

“We are excited to assess/ measure our current initiatives as well as incorporate new ideas that promote a healthy lifestyle. The results will ultimately net us a more effective fighting force, all the while improving the lives of our families and reducing unnecessary medical expenses borne out of poor lifestyle choices,” he continued.

According to James Duff, HBI project officer for JBPHH, the Healthy Base Initiative will continue for about a year and the installations will be assessed to see what programs worked best. This information will be shared throughout the DoD.

“One of the great things that the Healthy Base Initiative will do is provide metrics and help to establish the importance of some of the health-related programs we have. These metrics can then be used to help validate programs and ensure that they survive the current fiscal climate,” Duff explained.

“Even though the Healthy Base Initiative is only a one-year pilot program, my hope is that the initiatives that are put in place will continue to have a positive impact on all those that live and work on JBPHH for years to come,” he added.

This program and the DoD’s Operation Live Well are part of the president’s National Prevention Strategy and complement the first lady’s Let’s Move! program.