

## Timely Training Saves Life!



Employees of Marine Corps Community Services' Facilities and Maintenance Division often encounter physically challenging situations as part of their normal work day.

"Because of the pending threat of danger, employees are required to attend yearly safety classes. We make it part of our mission to ensure that our Facility and Maintenance employees are safety trained," said Mr. Dave Parker, Facilities and Maintenance Director. "We reach out for training from various sources such as the Naval Hospital and Base Safety. Basically anywhere we can get safety training, we will take it. We want to ensure that our employees know how to assist in a medical emergency during their line of duty," added Parker.

Training is especially important for those employees who work in the Mechanical Section of MCCS' Facilities and Maintenance Division. The Mechanical Section is responsible for electrical, plumbing, refrigeration, air conditioning, and must be present during many MCCS events. "Our employees often find themselves in very hazardous situations. Every employee gets yearly Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Certification training. We also require our employees to obtain Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification every two years," said Mr. Marty Fairchild, Mechanical Supervisor.

When Mr. Keith West was in the classroom taking the required CPR training, he did not know that he would be called upon to actually use his training just one week later.

Mr. Gino Mercurio, a member of the Mechanic crew, was enjoying his lunch in the break room when he began to choke. "At first I thought it was just something in my throat. So I got up and went to the sink to see if I could just clear my throat," said Mercurio.

"When Gino got up, I didn't think anything about it. All I knew was that he was trying to clear his throat and was going to the sink to get water," said West.

"Every time I tried to clear my throat, the object became more lodged and started to constrict my ability to breathe. I soon realized that it was more serious. I turned from the sink and looked at Keith and gave the universal choking sign of two hands to my throat," added Mercurio.

Immediately Keith West recognized the sign he learned from CPR class and jumped from his seat and ran over to Mr. Mercurio. "I immediately started to apply the Heimlich maneuver to dislodge the obstacle. My first and second attempts to dislodge the food particles were unsuccessful. I tried one more time but still was unsuccessful. I wasn't sure if I was helping," said West. "I began to doubt that I would be able to dislodge the food. There is a size difference between us and I was not sure if I was able to get my arms around Gino enough to apply the necessary force needed," added West.

Mr. Mercurio fighting to stay calm tapped on Mr. West's leg and shook his head up and down. Mr. West knew it was helping. Mr. West then applied forceful thrust with his hand against Mr. Mercurio's back.

"Just like in the movies and training, the food flew out of my mouth and onto the floor," said Mercurio.

"This situation just goes to show you that you never know when training you receive will save another person's life. You go through this training, watch the videotapes and practice on mechanical dummies. But when real life situations happen, you don't really know how you are going to react. But in this situation, my basic instincts and training took over and I was able to react," said West.

"I am very grateful for Keith's actions. As the situation was happening it seemed surreal. During the time of my choking, you know you are in trouble but you don't really comprehend the entire situation. It was not until afterwards that I was able to realize what happened. The entire situation was amazing and unbelievable. It was a life or death situation, and the training is something that worked," said Mercurio.

"This situation goes to show that you never know when you are going to be called upon to help someone who is in trouble," said Parker.