



Drawn to hope

Trevor Romain visited W.T. Sampson High school and talked to students about deployment, interested in how they cope with their parent's absence. Romain filmed the event to use for a portion of an upcoming educational DVD that focuses on deployments called, 'With You All the Way.' – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell

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JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Children worry. When a parent is deployed, it's not only the adults who have new problems to deal with.

While the adults deal with the day-to-day realities of having to carry on a normal life while a spouse is away on deployment, sometimes the small – yet significant – voice of a child need to be heard.

Adults try to teach children to deal with their problems but often teach them to push their problems away by telling them not to worry, explained Trevor Romain, author, illustrator and children's motivational speaker who travels world-wide to deliver his message of hope, inspiration and self-help to children, relating to them in a way they can understand.

"As we get older, we tell kids what we think they need to hear instead of listening to them," Romain said.

Romain recently visited Guantanamo Bay to talk to children at W.T. Sampson Middle School and High School and to film portions of his upcoming educational DVD.

Romain warmed up his audience, relating to listeners by sharing his own past.

"I was dyslexic and I was in special [education]," Romain revealed. "I think I'm the only dude in the world who failed an aptitude test."

Through story-telling of his experiences of being bullied as a child, to working with

terminally ill children and working in child refugee camps in Africa, Romain draws in the audience to deliver his message. His goal is to empower children to understand their feelings and feel comfortable expressing them.

"When kids realize I'm not trying to preach or lecture them, they relax and read my sincerity," Romain said.

Romain's curriculum and messages have impacted public and private schools nationwide and within the last few years, has been recognized by the Department of Defense as a tool to reach out to military children.

The DoD identified a correlation between children's behavior and the deployment cycles of military service members and took measures to support military families by asking Romain to develop a curriculum to help military children identify and understand their feelings, words and actions.

"We saw how troop movements would affect [negative behavior] within DoD schools and needed Trevor to develop something specific for the military family," said Lee Adleman, educational services facilitator for the Fleet and Family Support Center at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

"There are [service members] who have been deployed to Iraq five times and some children have lived through all five rotations," Adleman added. "These kids are unique because they're kids of parents who are away fighting a war on terrorism."

Romain's curriculum addresses subjects

like homework, bullying, divorce and even death by helping children to identify and express the things that stress them and cause them to act out. For the military child, he helps them deal with deployment grief.

Romain explained that the lessons come with a journal to encourage children to write about their feelings or draw a picture or doodle that represents something significant in their life, giving them an outlet instead of keeping it inside.

"Trevor was unbelievable, his connection with the students and ability to share his experiences with the kids helped them channel their emotional strife in a positive way," Adelman said.

As a result of Romain's curriculum, DoD schools noticed a drastic decrease in negative behavior, according to Adelman.

"I had a child come up to me and tell me, 'Mr. Romain, you changed my life. I used to be a bully but I listened to your talk and watched your video and now I'm not a bully anymore and I feel better!'" Romain said.

"If a child can walk away with knowledge about how to deal with grief or bullying, I've made a difference," said Romain. "I want to help kids reach inside and find the courage to tackle what comes their way.

"Don't skirt around the sadness," Romain continued, "confront it, be in it and grow from it."

Romain's books, DVD's and other educational materials can be found at the Web site www.militaryonesource.com, as well as at www.trevoromain.com.