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## Benfold Guests Experience Life at Sea, Work Toward Quals

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SAN DIEGO (NNS) -- Friends and family members returned to San Diego alongside the crew of the guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold (DDG 65) Nov. 3 as part of a tiger cruise, marking the end of a six-month deployment.

Tiger cruises have been a long-standing tradition in the Navy for warships returning from deployment and help expose family and friends to life at sea. Benfold's guests departed Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Oct. 27 for the trip to San Diego.

"We want to show our Tigers what we do at sea," said Cmdr. Tom Disy, Benfold's commanding officer. "We also want to make a favorable impression so that our tigers help spread the word about the importance and benefits of serving at sea."

Once on board, Benfold's tigers attended seminars on seamanship, navigation, damage control and learned the basics of being a Navy Sailor.

"Damage control is important in keeping a ship operational," said Lt. Sheryll Evangelista, Benfold's damage control assistant. "Being able to show the tigers what we do to combat casualties gives an appreciation for the amount of work the crew must do, in a short amount of time, to save lives and the ship."

Tigers observed their sponsors standing watch and saw first-hand what their functions were to keep the ship safe and operating efficiently. Tigers also viewed the 5-inch gun, close-in weapon system, and chaff live fire exercises.

In order to help educate the guests about the ship, Benfold created a tiger surface warfare specialist personal qualification standard book in which each tiger pursued signatures for conducting or observing various events.

"It was our goal to not only plan a fun cruise for our guests but also provide an educational experience that would give the tigers a better understanding of where their tax money is being spent," said Interior Communications Electrician 1st Class (SW) Jason Jones, Benfold's assistant tiger cruise coordinator.

Every night, personnel from Benfold's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation office and the first class petty officers association provided activities for the guests. Whether tigers were playing video games, eating nachos and ice cream, or enjoying movies on the flight deck, a good time was shared by all.

Benfold's crew also sponsored a Halloween party, costume contest, trick-or-treating and a haunted decontamination station.

"The enthusiasm and participation showed by the crew and tigers made this deployment homecoming the best I have ever experienced," said Gunner's Mate 1st Class (SW) Julia Neuweiler, who hosted some of the tiger cruise activities.

Benfold deployed May 4 as part of the USS Peleliu Expeditionary Strike Group (PELESG). The PELESG conducted maritime security operations in the U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility.

For more news from USS Peleliu (LHA 5) - Peleliu Expeditionary Strike Group, visit [www.navy.mil/local/lha5/](http://www.navy.mil/local/lha5/).