

Scouts alive and well on NAF Atsugi

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SCOUTING

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan – The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) organization is alive and well on Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi.

This year they celebrated their 55th year on the installation in August with an event never done before, but hoped by some to continue through the years.

On October 13, 1957 the first charter was signed for the Boy Scouts to be on Naval Air Station Atsugi. Nearly seven years after NAS Atsugi was first established.

Since then, the organization has had its ups and downs through the years, including the installations name change from Naval Air Station to Naval Air Facility.

But for 2011, the BSA is looking to make their presence known.

“We give kids another option,” said Rob Weddermann, District Commissioner, Far East Council, Japan District. “Other than sports, after school activities and video games, what they learn at Boy Scouts is something they’ll keep with them for life.”

The responsibilities the scouts keep range from maintaining the installation’s nature trail to assisting the scouts from Tama Hills with the clean up of their scouting campsite.

For their 55th year celebration, the scouts invited their Japanese counterparts to participate in an all day event.

Activities began on a Friday night for the young scouts. Through heavy rains, scouts were able to help secure the hourglass tower, construct tents to sleep in, and stand witness to a flag retirement ceremony.

It was an event that Joe Mortimer, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the ceremonial officer hoped would have an impact on the scouts.

“It’s a sense of purpose,” said Mortimer. “As to what the flag is all about and to understand the importance of rendering honor to a flag that is no longer serviceable and no longer a fitting symbol of our country.”

Saturday morning found the scouts rising early for breakfast and morning stretches before competing in the day’s events.

Competitions included tug-o-war, pinewood race car derbies and water balloon launches.

Among the scouting troops that were present from NAF Atsugi and other bases, the Girl Scouts were in attendance as well as members of the Scouting Association of Japan, enhancing the relationship between the two associations.

“Just to interact with [the Japanese Scouts] and their traditions,” said Weddermann. “It’s amazing. You’re learning different cultural experiences. We teach them and they teach us.”

Scouting on NAF Atsugi has offered many opportunities to the lives of young boys and girls that greatly influences them as well as their leaders.

“I really believe in the Boy Scouts program,” said Weddermann. “If everybody sees that we’re doing a good thing in the community, the kids are coming along, they’re learning respect and responsibility, they’ll want to be apart of that program. Every generation will bring in new people, new excitement and it will keep going forward.”

If you would like to be involved in scouting on NAF Atsugi, please contact Rob Weddermann at DSN: 264-5074 or email at weddmann@msn.com.