Corpsmen , Nurses work together for patient care

Story and photo by MC2 Josh Curtis, USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

The roads are quiet as Lt. Amanda Burns pulls her car up to the main gate of Fleet Activities, (FLEACT), Yokosuka. The sentry offers his morning salutation as he checks her ID. As she pulls into base she glances down at clock on the front of her car stereo. It reads 6:15 a.m. In an hour the base will be alive with activity. The roads will be filled with cars and parking will become scarce.

But for now, all is calm and Burns has no problem finding a parking spot close to where she works. It's just one of the few perks that come with beating the morning rush. She turns the engine off and takes a few moments to enjoy the early morning calm before starting her 12 hour shift. The sound of birds singing their morning song wafts through the air as Burns reaches back to grab her uniform. But it's not the blue and grey pattern of the Navy Working Uniform nor is it the more formal Khaki uniform. Uniform of the day for Burns is a pair of comfortable, yet practical, blue cotton scrubs, a bright white lab coat and a pair of durable sneakers.

HM3 Wanda Santana, U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, Multi-Service Unit, performs a safety check on a crash cart. Santana and nurses along with the other corpsman who work in the Multi-Service Unit, also known as the Ward, start their 12-hour shifts with assigning emergency response roles to each person and then move on to checking their equipment to ensure it's ready to use at a moment's notice.

You see Burns is a registered nurse stationed aboard United States Naval Hospital (USNH), Yokosuka. She works in the hospital's Multi-Service Unit. Located on the fifth floor of the building this unit is home to patients staying in the hospital. The doctors, nurses and corpsman working here have another name for it: The Ward.

After changing into her scrubs Burns takes the elevator ride up to the Ward. Making her way to the nurses' station she meets up with her teammate for the day Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Wanda Santana.

Decked out in the same blue scrubs Santana is nearing the end of an eight month rotation on the ward. Her and Burns have worked together many times in the past and have a sort of natural rhythm. Which is good because Burns and Santana, along with all the medical staff working on this floor, have a very important job.

It is their responsibility to care for patients who call USNH Yokosuka home for any span of time. The length of time varies from patient to patient, it could be an afternoon, a month or even longer, but the job is always carried out the same way, and the day always starts with the same routine.

"At 6:45 am we do reports, where we do a handoff from the night shift to the day shift," said Burns. "We go through all the patients that are currently on the ward, what brought them into the ward and their condition," she said.

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He continued to talk about the importance of region stability, the global economic impacts made in the long term, and the responsibilities of the 7th Fleet.

"Our (7th Fleet) responsibilities to the United States, the region, and the world, to sustain stability here in Asia Pacific is significant," said Swift. "Like nowhere else, if we get wrong here, recovering from the global impacts will be difficult and painful. This is largely a maritime issue and as such a responsibility of every Sailor that serves in 7th Fleet. We have a critical role, both in getting it right, ensuring that stabilizing efforts are counter-balanced and controlled as well as making it right when instability takes through and re-establishing the security of the seas is required."

Commander, Fleet Activities, Yokosuka Capt. David A. Owen, was also in attendance as the host. Amongst other honored guest were Commander in Chief, Self-Defense Fleet Vice Adm. Yasushi Matsushita, Commandant, Yokosuka District, Vice Adm. Tomohisa Takei and Yokosuka District, Self-Defense Fleet, Command Master Chief Hideo Takahashi.

Swift then used his time on center stage to acknowledge what he deemed as the real reasons for everyone to be in attendance for the evenings' festivities.

"But I am not here to talk about the role of 7th Fleet Sailors in the region," said Swift. "I am here to accomplish two tasks; the first is to thank Sailors. Regardless of the Navy uniform they wear, for their service. Service to country; service to fellow joint-war fighters; service to shipmates, and service to self."

"The second is to thank those that support us. Spouses, sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, extended families and friends; it is through their sacrifice that we are able to serve. Support for the Sailor comes in many forms; it comes in direct support through ensuring in our absence that check books are balanced, finances are managed and children are schooled, counseled, coached and fathered. Support for those who serve comes in the form of mired of commitments; individually and collectively through organizations like Readiness Groups, Fleet and Family Services, MWR (Morale, Recreation and Welfare), Navy Marine Corps Relief, Navy League, our Ombudsman, Red Cross and many others."

The Admiral then provided his own perspective on how best to explain to friends and acquaintances outside of the Navy who ask why and how Sailors are able to achieve the things they do on a daily basis.

"While we each have individual reasons for our service and sacrifice, collectively the answer is clear and simple; this is who we are, this is what we do. So this 237th birthday is about the collective us; those in uniform and those that support those in uniform. This birthday is about celebrating what has been accomplished, the examples set and the high standards achieved by those that have gone before us. It is also about recognizing we have continued to exceed those expectations and standards.

We have been cut from the same cloth of our past which ensures future generations of Sailors and their families will look back on us with the same admiration we look back on our predecessors. As Sailors of the United States Navy and their supporters, tonight is about who we are and what we have been doing for centuries. Happy 237th birthday."

Upon the completion of the admiral's speech, all honored guest participated in a ceremonial toast conducted in honor of the United States and Japan.