Association raises funds for high school academic scholarships

Story and photo by MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

The Filipino-American Association (FIL-AM) raised funds towards academic scholarships for Nile C. Kinnick High School as they hosted a barbecue near the main gate of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) May 7.

FIL-AM will be putting all donations made at the day's event towards two $1,000 academic scholarships to be awarded to students who attend the high school. The base-recognized organization conducts fundraisers for multiple charitable causes and participates in basewide events.

In 2009, the last year the fundraiser was held, the society raised 3,000 dollars for the scholarship fund.

FIL-AM currently has 55 members on base ranging from service members to families, and is open to anyone of any national origin who wishes to join. In the upcoming weeks, FIL-AM will also raise money for bantay bata (child watch), a charity that aims to collect $2,000 for less fortunate children in the Philippines. The society is also collecting donations to aid the victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan.

"I was born in the Philippines and grew up hearing stories about America and General MacArthur, and how they helped the Philippines during World War II," said Lt. Rhyss Hizon, president of FIL-AM. "Now I am fortunate enough to have a good career in the Navy and the chance to help children of the community by offering them a chance to further their education."

Society members spent the evening by the facility's main gate offering hotdogs, hamburgers and pork for however much patrons were willing to give.

"We all like doing events like this for the benefit of the community," said Aerographer's Mate 1st Class John Diaz. "It's a good way to spend some of your free time, and you know you are helping others."

This month the Department of Defense is celebrating the Asian Pacific Islander community for its efforts and contributions of the U.S. armed forces. Diaz said that he is proud to be serving in a Navy that recognizes past, present and future contributions of all of its members.

"Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month educates the younger generation of Asian-Americans about what past generations have accomplished and gives them something to strive for," said Hizon.

Members of the Filipino-American Association (FIL-AM), serve hotdogs and hamburgers to a Sailor and his family here near the main gate during a scholarship fundraising event May 7. FIL-AM will be putting all donations made at the day's event towards two $1,000 academic scholarships to be awarded to students of Kinnick High School.

Zenkokai winners announced

By MC3 Hayley Oxborrow, CNFJ Public Affairs

Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan announced the winners of the 2011 Nippon Zenkokai Good Conduct awards in a message released May 3. Recipients include nine Sailors and four organizations from throughout Japan. The individuals are chosen based on their public service to Japan and their communities. Individual and group winners include:

- Jeffrey Wilson, Naval Air Facility, Misawa
- Aviation Support Equipment Technician 1st Class Dennis Koon, Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Detachment, Misawa
- Information Systems Technician 1st Class Malkia Ross, Navy Information Operations Command, Yokosuka
- Yeoman 1st Class Fletcher Mcneil, Naval Air Facility, Atsugi
- Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Rodell Hardaway, Naval Air Facility, Atsugi Supply Department
- Sakae Anne Suralie, Naval Air Facility, Atsugi Fleet and Family Support Center
- Operations Specialist 2nd Class Adam Richards, Commander Fleet Activities, Sasebo Port Operations
- Charles D. Bush, Commander Fleet Activities, Okinawa
- Yeoman 3rd Class Rei Okada, Commander Fleet Activities, Okinawa
- Naval Air Facility, Misawa First Class Petty Officer Association
- Navy Information Operations Command, Misawa
- Naval Air Facility, Atsugi Morale, Welfare and Recreation Child and Youth Programs
- Naval Air Facility, Atsugi Safety and Security Departments

The Nippon Zenkokai Association is an independent non-profit organization under the control of the cabinet office of the Japanese government and which is committed to encouraging good conducts of people and to enhancing warm mutual relationship among the members of society. In 1995, the award was opened to honor foreigners who have contributed to the betterment of life in Japan.

An awards ceremony will be held Nov. 26 at Meji Shrine. Further information will be provided to the winners and their commands as the ceremony date grows closer.

Training command continues strong relationship with Japanese children's home

By MC2 Devon Dow, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Sailors assigned to Afloat Training Group Western Pacific (ATGWP) visited the Shiroyama Children's Home to drop off toys, summer clothes and equipment for a barbecue pit they are building for the facility May 7.

Spanning more than 15 years, ATGWP has built a strong relationship with the home, providing donated goods, labor and playing games and spending time with the more than 70 children at the home.

Chief Logistics Specialist (SW/AW) Barry Ventura, ATGWP community service (COMSERV) coordinator, said the opportunity to give back to the Japanese community is something that he and his command are very proud of.

"Every time we arrive there, we can see the children sticking their heads out the window, smiling, waving and greeting us, that alone makes it all worth it," Ventura said. The commitment of our volunteer efforts exceeds 110 percent, everyone wants to be involved. Some people call it volunteer work, but for us, it is a great time."

Aside from gathering donations for the children, ATGWP raises funds through their coordinated bazaar and base barbecues. A percentage of the proceeds collected are donated to the children's home. With these funds, ATGWP performs projects upgrading the facilities, which include installing rubber matting on the playground and a current project, building a barbecue pit at the home for future events.

When the opportunity arises for open base functions or command picnics, ATGWP invites the children so they can receive a first hand look at the naval facility and engage with the Sailors in their environment.

Receiving his first look at the efforts made by ATGWP with the children's home was Cmdr. Christopher Downey, ATGWP executive officer. In early December 2010, only days following his arrival to the command, he saw just how much giving back to the community meant to them.

"I attended the command's Christmas party and while I was there, representatives from the children's home were presented a check based on donations the command had raised for them throughout the year. Needless to say I was impressed, but it gave me insight on the quality of Sailors I would be working with," he said.

Operating forward-deployed in Yokosuka, Japan, ATGWP is a naval training command that serves Sailors and Marines from more than 80 tenant commands at Fleet Activities Yokosuka and Fleet Activities Sasebo. The command also augments training and evaluation support to 11 permanently forward-deployed Navy ships in the 7th Fleet.

ATGWP proudly employs the best Sailors in the Navy and keeps their warfare expertise sharp by maintaining technical in-rate currency of professional knowledge and skills through a robust training program of formal Navy schools, installation and factory training, technical symposiums, informal training and self study.