Sailors, local citizens roll up sleeves to clean Earth's land, sea

Story and photo by MC2 Devon Dow, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

More than 80 Sailors assigned to various commands on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) and local Japanese citizens rolled up their sleeves to take part in the annual CFAY land and sea Earth Day cleanup held April 30.

The volunteer event was hosted by the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) International Programs office. To start the day off, Sailors and members of Yokosuka Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center (SRF-JRMC) volunteered their time to scuba dive in Green Bay Marina, where they scanned the local waters removing debris. On land, Sailors and Japanese citizens picked up debris around base on guided routes and cleaned monuments. At the conclusion of the cleanup, a barbecue was held at Kosano Park for the volunteers.

Event organizer John Saito, Yokosuka MWR International Programs director, said he was happy with the day's events and the participation of the Sailors and Japanese citizens.

"We had a successful turnout," he said. "With the nice weather we are having today, it is great for the volunteers to get out and see the base. Every year we host this event we get the same results, Sailors and members of the local community giving their own time to beautify the base."

One of the missions of this annual event is to continue to promote the positive relationship and interaction between the Japanese citizens and U.S. Navy Sailors. These events also give Japanese citizens the chance to see the base first hand.

Yokosuka resident, Tomoko Tanaka, said having the opportunity to see *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) and *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) up close was something she will never forget.

Lt. Col. Oliver Washington, a chaplain assigned to U.S. Army Japan, jumps into the waters here at Green Bay Marina during a sea and land Earth Day cleanup April 30. More than 80 Yokosuka base Sailors and Japanese citizens participated in the event.

"I am very happy to be able to come to the base and clean up. This is my first time here," she said. "I have had a really good time and I have so many pictures of the ships, I cannot believe how big U.S. ships are."

For Chief Cryptologic Technician (Technical) Ned Lance, assigned to Afloat Training Group Western Pacific, the opportunity to go diving on a Saturday morning was something he could not miss.

"Pass up a day scuba diving… are you kidding me? Today has been awesome, anytime you can give back to the community here is rewarding," he said. "For me, today has been a win-win situation."

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 3rd Class Miguel Suarez, assigned to *George Washington*, said keeping the base clean at all times should be a top priority for Sailors.

"This is where we call home," he said. "Being forward-deployed makes Yokosuka a little more personal, versus returning stateside after a deployment. We have to make sure we do our best to keep the base clean. It has been great to see members of the Japanese community here today. It shows me that they care and are interested in the base as well. Overall it's been a really good day."

As one of the largest sea-going forces in the world, environmental awareness is an important part of the Navy.

The Navy spends millions of dollars each year on programs such as the marine mammal research program to reduce or eliminate the environmental effects of combat and peacekeeping operations while also supporting national security.

CFAY Earth Day promotes environmental awareness and host nation relations. Major Earth Day events include trips to Chiba, Japan, to clean beaches and several other trips throughout Kanagawa.

Retired Japanese principals visit The Sullivans Elementary School

By Steve Parker, The Sullivans Elementary School Public Affairs

The Sullivans Elementary School recently played host to an interesting group of visitors who visited class rooms, interviewed administrators and enjoyed lunch with children throughout a day of discovery and cultural exchange that was unique to everyone involved.

Members of The Association of Retired Japanese Women Principals spent an enlightening day at Sullivans with teachers, students and school administrators. The association is a nationwide group of women who have spent their careers working as administrators in Japanese schools.

The association meets periodically to discuss topics of mutual interest and, on a slightly overcast Friday in April, they met at the Yokosuka Chuo station and walked down to the front gate of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka. They were met by three teachers from the school as well as Shoko Wicke, a parent who volunteered to help perform translation duties during the tour.

After a brief windshield tour of the base, the retired principals arrived at the school for a welcoming breakfast where they were greeted by school Principal Walter S. Wilhoit. The group visited the media center and several classrooms where they observed a host nation lesson about Koi Nobori, the famous carp streamers of Japan, with students from Toshie Mitsuhashi's class and a Spanish language lesson presented by students of Rocio Gutierrez's fourth-grade Spanish immersion class. Afterwards, they visited the Navy Education and Developmental Intervention Services offices before breaking for lunch.

Andrea Mail, The Sullivans Elementary School vice-principal, leads visiting Japanese retired principals in a rousing rendition of "*Musunde Hiraite*," a Japanese children's song, during a question and answer session with Sullivan's school administrators April 22. The visiting principals, members of The Association of Retired Japanese Women Principals, spent a day of discovery and cultural exchange at the school with teachers, students and school administrators.

Photo by Patrice Noma

The visitors dined on pepperoni pizza in the school cafeteria as they interacted with students and each other. "We enjoyed eating lunch. The cafeteria was very interesting for us because Japanese schools do not have a cafeteria," said Kazuko Tomomori, one of the visitors.

"It was fun talking to them because they were learning about us," said Conner McAllister, a Japanese speaking fourth-grader at the school.

After lunch, the principals attended a question and answer session with school assistant principals, Andrea Mial and Laverne Outen. They were delighted by Mial's impromptu rendition of "Musunde Hiraite," a Japanese children's song she had learned as a child growing up in Hawaii. The visiting retired principals all clapped and happily sang along with her delightful performance.

Following the question and answer session, the visitors attended a special education briefing presented in Japanese by Vicky Araki, a Sullivans bilingual speech-language pathologist. They then visited classrooms including Jeff Sparling's technology resource classroom, Beth Cruse and Tamara Choate's music classes, and a dynamic fraction lesson presented by Michele Foust using Smartboard technology. They spent several minutes examining the Department of Defense Education Activities (DoDEA) newly adopted curricular social studies materials and textbooks, which were being presented to teachers by Michael Pine, from DoDEA Japan District office.

Prior to departing, the visiting principals thanked everyone involved in presenting them with such a unique opportunity for cultural exchange. They praised the Sullivans teachers who had hosted them and expressed their admiration on how the classrooms were tailored to the needs of the students. At the end of the day everyone happily returned to their normal daily routines, greatly enriched by one of the many unique cultural opportunities continually on offer to us as residents of Japan.