Afloat Training Group Bazaar provides oportunity to shop, help children

Story and photos by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Afloat Training Group Western Pacific (ATGWP) Yokosuka held its semiannual bazaar in Yokosuka Middle School's gym Nov. 20.

The bazaar allowed merchants and artisans from the local and international scene to sell their wares to the Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka community.

"This bazaar is to support the ATGWP Sailors, for example, some of their liberty activities can receive some help from the profits we get from this," said Senior Chief Logistics Specialist Gil Ruelos, who works for ATGWP and coordinated the event. "We choose to have a bazaar because it is more consistent. We also put on car washes and burger burns but those depend on the weather. Here, people can come inside and enjoy themselves while they look around."

The event has been held twice a year for more than five years. Many of the vendors have returned from previous bazaars to sell their goods. There were stands selling asian style furniture, rugs, jewelry, kimono and kokeshi dolls.

"I want to present a part of Japanese culture to the military people," said Takanobu Takehara who was selling kokeshi dolls. These are traditional Japanese dolls that are mostly cylindrical with a round head, made from wood and painted bright colors. Some of the dolls Takehara was selling were made to look like Sailors and Marines. "Maybe it's a small idea, to sell these kind of things, but it can help us to become better tomodachi (friends)."

"Le Kimono" sold kimono at the bazaar and introduced attendees to the formal Japanese dresses. Curious shoppers walked in and learned a little about Japanese culture while picking up a colorful obi, a wrap that goes around the outside of a kimono, or an ornate jacket. Staci Rowe was one of the patrons admiring the designs.

"We've heard that the bazaar is good place to get some unique stuff like the paintings or woodworkings," said Rowe. "We know that it supports the Sailors and the children's home."

The Shiroyama Children's Home has received help from ATGWP for several years. Aside from the financial donation from the bazaar proceeds, ATGWP Sailors spend time with the children at different events through out the year.

Amanda Romero from "Le Kimono" explains the design and meaning of a Japanese kimono to Staci Rowe at the ATGWP semiannual bazaar in Yokosuka Middle School gym Nov. 20. The bazaar brought off-base vendors on base to sell to CFAY community members.

"We also have a community relations project going on," said Ruelos. "There is a local children's home we donate to and help build their playground and a lot of other projects at their home. Last year we donated over $7,000 to the childrens' home and we also use some of that to have a Christmas party with the children."

Ruelos said that they plan to continue holding the bazaars for year to come. The next bazaar will be in the summer of 2012.

Nile C. Kinnick High School cheerleaders are best in Far East

Story by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

The Nile C. Kinnick High School Cheerleading squad took first place at the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Pacific Far East competition Nov. 13. They bested other squads from DoDEA schools from all over Japan, Korea and Guam.

"Ten cheerleaders are selected to go to the competition from every school each year.," said Junior Varsity cheer coach Brandon Donat." This year we brought eight of our varsity cheerleaders and two of our junior varsity (JV) students."

The 10 cheerleaders were, Ajia Murphy, Josh Hunt, Khaimook Grosshuesch, Alexus Graddic, Jelisa Hall, Angela Holloman, Meme Johnson, Havilah Johnson, Joey Marino and Donna Angeles. Along with the coaches the cheerleaders traveled to Misawa Air Base to compete.

"We've been building up stunts and stuff all year at games and pep rallies but, when you go to the Far East (competition) you have to wipe all that out of your mind and learn an all new routine," said Ajia Murphy, the squad's student captain.

"It's a minute and a half routine, you get the material at the camp and then you have to put together the routine. That was the main event," said Donat. "There were other individual events but it's the main routine that brings home the banner."

The competition was judged by National Cheerleading Association (NCA) judges. The scores for the events were not announced until the very end. When they started announcing the results, the cheerleaders were gathered together waiting to see how they did.

Nile C. Kinnick High School cheerleaders pose for a photo during the Far East competition Nov. 13. The cheerleading squad won top honors for their team and individual routines that they came up with and performed during the competition.

Photo by Brandon Donat

"We thought we did pretty well but you never really know," said Alexus Graddic. "There is that moment before and we were holding hands and hoping we had one it. Then, they said it was us and our whole team just went ridiculously crazy and we were so happy. It was great. It's a moment I'll remember forever."

Together the team received the following awards; first place in Division 1 competition, first place in Top Gun Tumbling Competition awarded to Joey Marino, first place in Partner Top Gun Stunts competition awarded to Josh Hunt and Meme Johnson, Nationals Invitation Bid, eight cheerleaders were awarded All-American Awards Ajia Murphy, Josh Hunt, Khaimook Grosshuesch, Alexus Graddic, Angela Holloman, Meme Johnson, Joes Marino and Donna Angeles, the entire team was awarded Superior Ribbon Awards (highest recognition), and the squad received an NCA Spirit Stick.

After this year most of the cheerleaders will graduate or will take on advance placement classes that will prevent them from participating in another year of cheerleading at Kinnick High School.

"It feels great to win for your last Far East [competition]. It feels like you've done your job or at least it felt that way to me," said Murphy. "I think they will be able to do it again next year, they just have to work hard for it."