Blue Ridge Sailors celebrate holiday season with party

By MC2 Fidel C. Hart, USS Blue Ridge Public Affairs

USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) Sailors showed their holiday spirit Tuesday at the command holiday party held at the Yokosuka Chief Petty Officer's (CPO) Club Nov. 29.

More than 800 Sailors, their family members and friends enjoyed the event in the festively decorated CPO Club, which included a catered buffet, sushi bar, live band, professional photographer and $15,000 in prizes provided by the ship's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) committee.

Prizes included gift certificates, cameras, portable music players, tablet computers, video game consoles and a pair of round-trip plane tickets. Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Paul Garilao was surprised when his name was called as the winner of a digital SLR (single-lens reflex) camera.

"Before I arrived, I had actually been praying for a camera," said Garilao. "It is something I've wanted for a long time. Since I like to blog about my travels, now I have a great camera to take pictures with."

MWR spent approximately $40,000 on the venue rental costs, catering, prizes and other support to host the party.

Despite the holiday party being at a new location, it was a success according to MWR President Crytologic Technician (Technical) 2nd Class (SW) Jennifer Pastor.

"The prizes are fantastic and with tonight being successful, I am looking forward to next year's party," said Pastor.

The biggest winners of the night may have been the Sailors advanced to the next rank by *Blue Ridge* Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Grieco. Quartermaster 3rd Class Louis Gonzales and Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Rene Mallari were meritoriously advanced to the rank of second class petty officer. Yeoman Seaman Randy Sarran, Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Brandon Frasier and Ship's Serviceman Seaman (SW) Stephen Graham were meritoriously advanced to the rank of third class petty officer. "Every one advanced tonight was well deserved," said Graham. "We are all hard workers that earned what we received tonight."

Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Brandon Frasier gets capped to petty officer 3rd class by Capt. Daniel Grieco at the *USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19)* 2011 Holiday Party Nov. 29. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Steven Khor

Stethem Sailors play soccer with Timor-Leste Defense Force

Story by Lt. Nicole Schwegman, Amphibious Squadron 11 Public Affairs

DILI, Timor Leste – Sailors from the guided-missile destroyer *USS Stethem* (DDG 63) joined members from the Timor-Leste Defense Force in a game of soccer Nov. 27.

The game was one of several professional and social events *Stethem* Sailors participated in with their Timor Leste Defense Force (F-FDTL) counterparts.

"This is all a part of the partnership that we are strengthening," said Cmdr. Brent DeVore, commanding officer of Stethem. "It was a great game played in an affable environment."

The game was held on Democracy Field for nearly two hours, with the Timor-Leste Defense Force team winning the game. Lt. j.g. Jhon Alcide, Stethem's team captain, said that the although the team played well, it was difficult to prevail against the Timor-Leste offense strategy.

"We put up a good friendly fight, but we couldn't overcome the team as they played very well," said Alcide. "However, despite the fact that we didn't win, it was a fun game and I think it paved the way for future events like this."

Players from both teams exchanged hats, small mementos and spent some time getting to know more about each other.

I was excited because it was an opportunity to meet people and to get off the ship a little bit", said Sonar Technician Surface Seaman Madeline Marshall. "I think it's good for the ship and it's good for them as well. I didn't know much about Timor-Leste before I got here but I was happy for the opportunity to learn more from the other team's soccer players.

In addition to the soccer game, Stethem offered tours of the ship, hosted an evening reception, and conducted repairs and training on engineering and combat systems aboard several Timor-Leste Navy vessels.

Officials emphasize patience, planning to reduce holiday stress

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn.– The holiday season has arrived and as Sailors and families prepare to celebrate, Navy officials have provided a standard operating procedure that can help keep the holidays merry and light.

"The holidays can be a hectic time for many," said Lt. Cmdr. Bonnie Chavez, Navy Behavioral Health Program director. "A lack of money, a lack of time, and the hype and commercialism of the season causes increased stress."

Surveys indicate people in the United States are more likely to feel their stress increase rather than decreases during the holidays, according to Chavez, who offers this advice:

• Take advantage of leave periods and relax for a few days by doing something you enjoy. Holiday stand-down periods provide flexibility for much needed rest to recover from the demands of Navy life.

• Be a good listener. Holidays are short and demands from friends and family for your attention will be high so try to give the gift of good company.

• Keep to your shopping budget. When it comes to holiday gift-giving, find creative ways to save money and remain in your budget. Racking up credit-card debt over the holidays may only cause further stress when the bills come due.

• Plan ahead and allow for plenty of time for holiday travel. Expect lines and delays in airports as the number of travelers swell. Prepare your car for road trips and know you'll be sharing the highway with higher numbers of travelers. Getting plenty of rest can make the journey less stressful and help you arrive safely.

• When tensions begin to rise, pause, take a deep breath, reflect and evaluate if the source of tension is really something that should be causing stress.

• The holidays are a time of excitement and exhaustion for young children. Overtired, over stimulated children are ripe for a stress inducing meltdown. Plan accordingly to anticipate disruptions in children's routines and exercise patience. The holidays are supposed to be merry.

• If deployment or geographic separation will keep you away from family and friends, plan your own observance upon your return or for a future date.

Chavez reminds Sailors to look out for their shipmates, too.

Deployments, separations, and work-ups are simply a fact of Navy life. Sailors are good at welcoming shipmates into their homes and including them in celebrations.

"Don't underestimate the positive difference you can make by taking a little extra time to care," said Chavez. "The things you do every day to make connections, to encourage, and show people how they are valued and belong, can help in small but important ways for the people around you."

Sailors and their families can learn more methods of navigating stress from their local Fleet and Family Service Center, their command chaplain, and from www.navynavstress.com.

Culinary Specialist Seaman Michael Angelo Leobo eats Christmas dinner with his friend, Information Systems Technician Seaman Apprentice Amy Jones, aboard the U.S. 7th Fleet command ship, *USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19)*. Blue Ridge and embarked U.S. 7th Fleet staff Sailors and family members annually enjoy Christmas dinner aboard the flagship.

U.S. Navy photo file photo by MC1 Josh Huebner