USO, The Sullivans School bring Marines Valentines greetings

By Steve Parker, The Sullivans School Public Affairs

It started Jan. 26 as just an idea. USO Japan Programs Coordinator Michelle Romuld was in a brainstorming session with USO Program and Marketing Director Jewell Willett. The two of them were looking for a way to reach out to the Marines at Camp Fuji located at the base of Mount Fuji in Japan. The idea for candy grams was floated, yet Romuld wanted to do more. What happened next led to an example of community members coming together to bring a little Valentine's cheer to Marines stationed aboard this remote camp.

That day, Romuld contacted The Sullivans School and reached out to Elizabeth Murphy, The Sullivans School office automation technician, a big title which loosely translated becomes, "the glue that holds the school together." Romuld asked if there were any teachers at the Sullivans who wanted to make some Valentine's cards for the USO. Valentine's that would be used to accompany candy grams that the USO wanted to give the Marines stationed at Camp Fuji. Murphy then spoke to Rosanna Currier, Sullivans School principal who suggested she send the request on to the art teachers to see if anyone was interested. Someone was very interested. She received an immediate reply from Eddie Mark, Sullivans art teacher. He was very interested but there was a problem. Mark was about to go on leave.

Mark thought of a solution. He would leave plans for his substitute telling her about the chance to do something for the Camp Fuji Marines. Murphy called Romuld back and set up a pickup date of Feb. 10. Then Amber Trimmer entered into the picture. Trimmer is a well known face at Sullivans as she is a regular substitute for the school. Trimmer substituted for Mark on February 7. She read the substitute plans left for her by Mark and knew that she was tasked with taking construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, markers, colored pencils and crayons and producing Valentine's magic for the Marines at Camp Fuji. Trimmer proceeded to help her students with the task assigned. Trimmer states, "It was a blast! The students had so much fun. I actually taught them how to make a heart by folding the paper in half and cutting a teardrop." The students were happy about making Valentine's cards the USO could turn into candy grams for the Marines. Madison McKenzie and Isabella Silvetti from Buffy Bennet's first-grade class stated, "We felt happy, because we knew it would make them smile!"

Three days later, Romuld picked up the Valentine's and delivered them to Fuji Base Chaplain Lt. Chris Earley. Earley received the candy grams from Romuld and distributed them to the thankful Marines stationed with the Combined Arms Training Center (CATC) at Camp Fuji for Valentine's Day.

"CATC at Camp Fuji is a Marine Corps base which provides training opportunities for all services deployed here in the Pacific area," said Earley. "We can see upwards of 5,000 training personnel come through each year, and we support them with only 150 permanent personnel. All of us here are without our families because this is a dependent restricted tour for us. Therefore, we are gratefully humbled every time we are blessed by families and friends, as we were in this case."

(Left) RPSN Brandon Toporczyk and Marines Lance Cpl. Leon Thacker and Pfc. Sean Ritchie from the Combined Arms Training Center enjoy candy grams they received due to a unique collaboration between USO Japan, The Sullivans Elementary School and the CATC in Camp Fuji Feb. 14. Photo by Christopher Earley

Leadership transition to begin in the DoDEA Japan District

From DoDEA Public Affairs

OKINAWA, Japan — Department of Defense Education Activity Pacific Deputy Director for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Dr. Joyce Lutrey will begin assuming temporary leadership responsibilities for the DoDEA Japan District Feb. 27.

DoDEA Pacific Deputy Director for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Dr. Joyce Lutrey will serve as acting superintendent for the DoDEA Japan District until a permanent replacement is hired. Photo courtesy of DoDEA

Lutrey will overlap with current DoDEA Japan District Superintendent Clayton Fujie until March 15. Fujie joined DoDEA in 2009 and is stepping down due to health complications.

Lutrey's temporary duties will include oversight of all 21 Department of Defense schools within the DoDEA Japan District. The schools span from as far north as Misawa Air Base on Honshu—the main island of Japan—to as far South as U.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo located on the third-largest Japanese island of Kyushu.

With more than 1,100 employees and an enrollment of 8,100 students, the DoDEA Japan District is one of the largest and most geographically dispersed in the worldwide DoDEA school system. The DoDEA Japan District Superintendent's Office is located on Yokota Air Base in the outskirts of the Tokyo metropolitan area.

As Deputy Director for CIA, Lutrey currently manages and supervises the DoDEA Pacific Area Office educational staff and district superintendents serving all 49 DoD schools in the Pacific theater. Before joining DoDEA in 2009, Lutrey had held two superintendent and three principal positions at school districts located in Arizona and Michigan. Prior to becoming an administrator, Lutrey taught middle and high school science and mathematics for 20 years in the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

In addition to a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, General Science and Psychology from the University of Michigan, Lutrey earned a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan University.

Also joining the DoDEA Japan District team to serve as an acting assistant superintendent is current DoDEA Korea District Assistant Superintendent for Transformation Carl Albrecht. The previously-advertised assistant superintendent position in the DoDEA Japan District remains vacant after a well-qualified candidate did not emerge from the initial recruitment effort. During the temporary assignment, Albrecht will team with Dr. Paula Miller who is also an assistant superintendent with the DoDEA Japan District.

In addition to his current duties related to military transformation and the impact on DoD schools located in South Korea, Albrecht has held numerous positions during his tenure with DoDEA including teacher, assistant principal, principal, chief of staff, and assistant superintendent. In 2010, Albrecht served with the DoD Civilian Expeditionary Workforce for a one-year tour in Kabul, Afghanistan as Deputy Chief of the Education Division for the NATO Training Mission.

Albrecht earned a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and went on to earn a master's in Supervision, Administration and Instruction from Boston University.

The temporary leadership assignments will provide DoDEA adequate time to conduct a global search for the best-qualified candidates for both positions. The position for the DoDEA Japan District Superintendent will be advertised soon. The DoDEA Japan District Assistant Superintendent position is currently open to the public with a closing date of March 13. The posting can be found at: http://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/309389800.

DoDEA Pacific provides a comprehensive K-12 education to the children of military and eligible civilian personnel families serving throughout Asia. DoDEA Pacific is composed of 49 schools, more than 24,000 students, and approximately 3,100 full-time professional educators and support staff. The schools are geographically organized into four districts: Guam, Japan, Okinawa and South Korea.

VPP, Cont. from pg.1

"USNH Yokosuka met the criteria in all 243 elements and earned the highest recognition, which is the Star for Excellence in safety," said USNH Yokosuka Supervisory Safety and Occupational Health Specialist William Heath. "Being a part of VPP demonstrates our capacity and ability to excel in safety for our staff, patients and visitors."

According to Heath, who assists the commanding officer in ensuring the safety of the hospital and is also a co-chair on the Environment of Care committee, the journey to VPP Star status began in April 2009, and started out with just a few hospital staff and committee members.

"Eventually all USNH Yokosuka staff were involved in at least three ways, which is a critical part of the VPP process that brings safety to the forefront of people's minds," Heath said. "Earning this award just motivates us to continue pressing for perfection."

Heath's main concern was to make the VPP process value-added and not be too simple or too complex, which means not doing more, but doing it smarter as a collaborative command success and by finding a balance that is sustainable and can continually improve.

"This is the first time a Department of the Navy OCONUS medical treatment facility has attained this recognition," said Pachuta. "We would like to extend a special thank you to Mr. Heath and the entire safety team for an amazing job in successfully implementing such a complex program two plus years of hard work. Congratulations and very well done!"

Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center Yokosuka was also recognized for attaining the equivalent of the OSHA VPP star status.