Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society kicks off annual fundraiser

By MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Nearly 30 Sailors, Marines and civilians gathered at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka's (CFAY) Community Readiness Center to kick off the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society's (NMCRS) 2012 fund drive March 1.

The goal of this year's drive is to achieve 100 percent contact with all service members on CFAY and raise awareness of the NMCRS mission to aid active and retired service members and eligible family members.

Commander, Naval Forces Japan Vice Adm. Dan Cloyd attended the opening drive brief. Cloyd said charitable contributions are encouraged, welcomed and approved.

Although sponsored by the Department of the Navy, the society is a private non-profit organization whose programs are totally funded by charitable donations.

"Our goal isn't to get people to give more, rather to get more people to give something," said Lt. j.g. Dave Mundell, regional and Yokosuka NMCRS coordinator. "If everyone donated $10 a month, we could help a lot of people."

The Navy Relief Society provided aid to active and retired Navy Sailors and their families beginning in 1904.

The NMCRS continues that legacy today extending their services to all military branches.

"It is important to know that all donations go directly to supporting Sailors," said Amy Lacaria, director of NMCRS Yokosuka, Atsugi, and Misawa. "This money helps support command missions by supporting the Sailors who actually do the job."

The society relies largely on its 3,600 trained volunteers to provide their services.

"The drive is not just aimed at service members, civilians can get involved too," said Lacaria. "It is a good way to gain experience and the NMCRS covers the cost of child care and transportation."

NMCRS provides free financial counseling and interest free loans to active duty service members.

The NMCRS fund drive runs through March 31. If you would like to donate, contact your command NMCRS representative or Lt. j.g. Dave Mundell at david.mundell@fe.navy.mil.

(Left) CNRJ Rear Adm. Dan Cloyd speaks to tenant command Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) representatives during the kick off of the 2012 NMCRS fund drive at the CFAY Community Readiness Center auditorium March 1. Although sponsored by the Department of the Navy, NMCRS is a private, non-profit organization whose programs are totally funded by charitable contributions and supported by the Secretary of Navy's annual fund drive conducted by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

Photo by Jeffrey C. Doepp

George Washington wins third consecutive retention award

Story and photo by MCSA Brian H. Abel,
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

The crew of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) recently won the Navy's Retention Excellence Award for the third consecutive year.

The award is presented by the Department of the Navy to the command that reaches the highest level of re-enlistments. Any ship that receives the award is allowed to paint its anchors gold. The *George Washington* was recognized for giving Sailors opportunities to re-enlist and further advance their careers., and will have its anchors painted gold again.

"We're here to make sure Sailors have the correct information for all the programs available to them," said Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Fraasch, a command career counselor. "If people want to stay in we give them the information they need to continue their career."

Sailors have to do their part to stay in the U.S. Navy. Each service member needs to maintain physical readiness, a strong work ethic and good conduct in and out of uniform.

"Sailors need to advance as quickly as they can, get good evaluations and not get into trouble," he said.

Sailors have a variety of options to make the Navy a long-term career. One path service members can take is to go from enlisted to commissioned officer.

"There are over 35 officer programs to choose from," said Fraasch. "You can apply for medical, engineering, supply and aviation."

Fraasch also said that winning the award was an all-hands accomplishment.

"This was a command effort," he said. "Navy Councilors are just a piece of the puzzle. All the Sailors, chiefs and officers played a part too. It's not just one person's work."

The command offers dedicated time every week to improve test scores for promotion through a program called School of Ship (SoS). Through programs such as SoS, *George Washington* saw a massive increase in advancement rates of 25 percent during the last advancement cycle from the September 2011 Navywide advancement exam.

MCPON sends Seabee birthday message

Special from Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SS/SW) Rick D. West

WASHINGTON – Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)(SS/SW) Rick D. West released the following Seabee birthday message to the fleet March 2.

"Shipmates,

Since March 5, 1942, the Navy has been recruiting Sailors for their construction battalions; strong, proud, hardworking Seabees with tremendous skill and plenty of experience. For 70 years, many unsung heroes of the Navy have been the men and women of the Naval Construction Force. We celebrate their official birthday today, but a week doesn't pass that I'm not reminded of the sacrifices made by this amazing community.

On the 70th birthday of the Navy Seabee, we remember Builder Chief Raymond Border, who gave his life for our nation's freedom on Oct. 19, 2011.

We pause to consider the actions of Seabees like Utilitiesman 3rd Class Crystal McDougal of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4, who was awarded the Purple Heart for injuries she sustained after her MRAP was hit by an IED. After the accident, her commanding officer and command master chief went to check on her in the hospital, and McDougal's only question concerned the welfare of her team.

As MCPON, I've had the opportunity to visit Bees all over the world, living up to your motto every day, whether in combat, humanitarian relief missions or helping to build communities or nations. I've seen first-hand the Forward Operating Bases and Combat Outposts you've constructed from the ground up. Most often times the Seabees are the first on the scene in the most dangerous of places ... and that's just fine with them.

Almost everywhere I go, whether I see an actual Seabee or not, I can tell they've been there. I've heard countless stories about Bees going above and beyond for the Navy, their fellow service member, communities, and for complete strangers from far off lands. None of it surprises me. Bees are now as they have always been, committed to the greater good of our Navy and our Nation.

Today's Seabees are living up to the standard set at places like Normandy and Guadalcanal. They're fighting where it's toughest and helping those in need. Seabees are taking the American ideals of compassion and spirit where they're needed the most and are leaving lasting memories behind. The world is finding out that our Navy's hands of friendship have a global reach.

As always, the Seabees "Can Do!" spirit will drive them through any challenges our Navy faces, and they will continue to be a prime source for the most battle-tested expeditionary Engineering Forces.

Happy 70th Birthday and OOOORAH Bees!

Very Respectfully,

MCPON (Honorary Seabee)"