Softland Video Rental still going strong at Yokosuka Base

Story and photo by Greg Mitchell, CFAY Public Affairs

Service members and families forward-deployed to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka who are looking for entertainment options, Softland Video outlets on board the installations offers them more than 13,000 titles.

"We focus on providing a family-friendly service for families who are stationed abroad," said Japan District Softland International Regional Manager Ana Ruschhaupt. "Event though there is no Blockbuster here on base, we do our best to provide enough titles to help keep customers somewhat fulfilled."

Last year, kiosk machines were installed on base, all of which are also controlled by Softland. There are currently four kiosks on base; two at fleet recreation center, one at Navy Exchange Autoport and one inside the video store. The housing areas of the Negishi and Ikego housing detachments have one each.

Softland Video Customer Service Clerk Katie Christopher re-organizes the shelves in the Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka store Aug. 19. The store provides more than 13,000 titles for Sailors and their families to choose from at a discounted rate.

"The kiosks are primarily used for new releases on a daily rental basis. These services complement each other," said Ruschhaupt.

Even though their has been a boom in video on demand services, Ruschhaupt mentioned, contrary to what the public may believe, these services have not really affected customer use of the store.

"We did see a slight drop off in sales initially, but sales have stabilized," said Ruschhaupt. "It is obvious from how much business that we still do that a lot of people prefer renting movies from time to time even if they have some of the other services.

"Our service is different in a few ways," said Ruschhaupt. "For example, Netflix does not have new releases until 28 days after the [release] date. We get them right away. Apple TV might offer viewers more actual TV programming than our stores, but we provide a huge catalog of movie titles that can be watched at the customer's convenience."

When the forward deployed forces are in port, business is at its highest, but is still solid even when they are out. Every Tuesday, the newest releases are put on the shelf and the staff has found that people like to come in and have conversation about different titles.

"You get that face-to-face interaction with people that ordering on-line cannot replace," said Katie Christopher. "I get a lot of questions about new releases, and you will find that sometimes customers like to converse amongst themselves over movies that are good or bad and so forth."

For more movie news and information, go to: www.softland.myvideostore.com

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According to Shook, the idea for the program came about last year when a middle school teacher approached her for some assistance with a bullying problem that was going on at that time inside the school.

FFSC's Anti-Bullying campaign began last week and runs through the end of September. Shook said that it's a separate program from the schools, but they will be working in conjunction with the schools at open house events next month.

According to FFSC Personal Financial Manager Tricia Marino, they coordinated this event to coincide with Yokosuka Middle School and The Sullivans Elementary School posting student/homeroom assignments on the windows of the Commissary.

"I knew that their would be a lot of kids and parents here today, so I thought it would be a good idea to maximize our outreach by touching all of them by letting them know (about our programs)," Marino said. "I thought handing out snow cones would be a nice treat for all of them."

Marino said she and her staff made more than 450 snow cones during the event.

According to Shook, the FFSC offers counseling in the following areas: financial, family employment, relocation, deployment, family readiness, ombudsman, exceptional family member, and life skills. These services are open to all active duty military members, government civilians, contractors and their family members.

The FFSC is located on the 4th floor of the Community Readiness Center, across the street from the main Navy Exchange and Commissary Complex. For more information about the anti-bullying program call 243-9605. Call the FFSC's main number, 243-FFSC (3372) for more details about their other programs.

Local students search for their class assignments which were posted at the CFAY Commissary during the FFSC Anti-Bullying Campaign kick off Aug. 24