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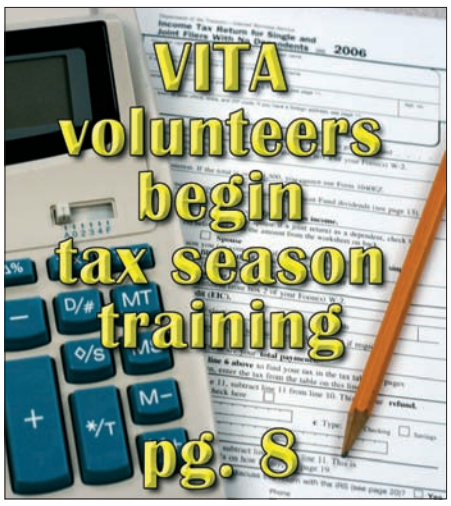

CFAY unites in remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Story and photo by Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Community members aboard Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) celebrated the life and continuing positive influence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by working to uphold his values during the Second Annual Unity Walk Jan. 19.

Sailors, students and community members embark on the second annual Unity Walk celebrating Martin Luther King Jr., aboard CFAY Jan. 19. The event, sponsored by the Yokosuka Diversity Empowerment Committee, was created to help individuals come together as a community on the federal holiday celebrating King's life.

Advertised as "a day on, not a day off," the event was created to help individuals come together as a community and continue the work of King on the federal holiday celebrating his life.

Citing King's message of unity, Yokosuka Diversity Empowerment Committee (YDEC) member and Submarine Group Seven Operations Specialist 2nd Class Alex Wiggins explained his reason for involvement in the event.

"I wanted to contribute to Dr. Martin Luther King's dream [of unity] and do as much as I can even though I'm overseas," said Wiggins, "I want to show appreciation for what he fought for."

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed welcomed those in attendance and led the walk alongside event organizers and participants. In his remarks, Weed explained his belief in the importance of the day and event.

"This is one of the most important events we have every year because we're constantly focused on the mission, we're constantly focused on the fleet, we're constantly focused on getting the job done," said Weed. "We work so hard that every once in a while we forget what's important, and what's important are the people standing here in front of us."

In addition to the walk from the CFAY headquarters building to the Oneida Monument in Kosano Park, the event featured a prayer from Chapel of Hope Chaplain Scott Schafer, a passionate keynote address from *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class Clyde Smith, music from the Kinnick High School marching band and refreshments.

The event was organized by YDEC, whose mission is to promote an inclusive and interactive community which welcomes, celebrates and promises respect for the entire diversity of human experience. The organization's membership comes from a multitude of commands and works on and off base to spread their message at a variety of events throughout the year.

Officially titled Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., the federal holiday was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Regan in 1986. The holiday is observed on the third Monday in January to recognize King's birthday on Jan. 15. The holiday is one of three federal holidays dedicated to an individual person.

The Sullivans namesake ship, school meet for first time

By Fumiyo Sato, CFAY Public Affairs

The crew of *USS The Sullivans* (DDG 68) visited The Sullivans Elementary School Jan. 7-9 during their port visit to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY). It was the first time the namesake ship, whose homeport is in Mayport, Fla., made a visit to the namesake school.

"It was an honor and a privilege for our Sailors to have this once in a lifetime opportunity to visit the school that shares the same namesake as the ship," said Ensign Carl Comasco, who organized the event after the idea was first proposed by the ship's Commanding Officer Cmdr. Ryan C. Tillotson.

"It is the first time *USS The Sullivans* has actually made a voyage to the Pacific area. We knew that we wanted to come here and visit the school because the ship may not be able to have a chance to do it again," said Executive Officer Lt. Cmdr. Shawn Johnston.

According to Johnston, one-third of *USS The Sullivans* approximately 260 person crew took turns to visit the school each day. The Sailors interacted with students through various activities such as reading, cleaning and helping out in class. Students also had a chance to learn about *USS The Sullivans* through the crew's presentation and visiting the ship.

QM2 Aaron Martinez assigned to the Arleigh-Burke class guided missile destroyer *USS The Sullivans* (DDG 68), runs from students during a game of tag at The Sullivans Elementary School at CFAY Jan. 7. Sailors from *USS The Sullivans* visited the school during a port visit to Yokosuka while deployed to the 7th Fleet area of responsibility. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Charles Oki

"Every facet of the school was impacted by the ship's visit," said The Sullivans School Principal Walter Wilhoit. "[For example,] the Boatswain's Mate blew his pipe to call student representatives out of their classroom to adopt a Sailor each day. He also blew the pipe to announce lunch each day. This gave the students a feel for ship-board life."

First grade teacher Lindsay Massey said her students loved having the Sailors in the classroom. "It was a great experience," Massey said. "The students were excited to tell the Sailors all about our school and to show them what we do everyday. The students were mesmerized as they sat and listened as Sailors read to them and then even more excited when they were able to read to the Sailors."

The Sailors of *USS The Sullivans* were popular everywhere they went at the school. On multiple occasions, crowds formed around them in the school playground. "The biggest surprise of the week was that students started asking for autographs, which turned into an autograph frenzy," Comasco said. "The visit with the school was 100 percent positive in every way. Every teacher, student and Sailor had a wonderful experience interacting with each other."

According to Wilhoit, the namesake ship's visit was memorable for both teachers and students. "I believe the excitement created by the school is unprecedented for any activity in the school's history," Wilhoit said after *USS The Sullivans* visit. "Teachers and students are still talking about it. The Sailors are too and many want to come back to the school when the ship pulls back in."