Ship Support Office Hong Kong facilitates efficient, enjoyable port visits for Sailors

Story by Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

Gracefully sweeping skyscrapers, mountain hiking trails, harbor side lightshows, peaceful beaches, culturally diverse markets and red-sailed Chinese junks (boats) are just some of the sights Ship Support Office Hong Kong hopes visiting Sailors and Marines see, in addition to receiving efficient logistics service.

"The primary goal for a ship visit in Hong Kong is quality of life for the Sailors and Marines," said Ship Support Office Hong Kong Assistant Officer in Charge Lt. Christina Wong.

While Ship Support Office Hong Kong facilitates logistics operations such as arranging for water taxis, cars and buses for visiting ships by acting as a liaison between the ships and the husbanding contractor which physically provides the services, they also work to ensure the visiting Sailors have an entertaining and culturally awakening experience during their visit.

Employees of Ship Support Office Hong Kong sort mail during a recent visit from the USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19). Providing postal service is one of the may ways they assist visiting ships.
Photo by Mike Augustine

"We do things that deal more with quality of life. We interact with the Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) contractor. Fenwick Pier also has a post office which provides a variety of mailing services to visiting Sailors. We do immigration processing for people who need to transit to or from Hong Kong. We do force protection coordination and even organize community service projects," said Wong. "We're unique in that there's actually a facility that's dedicated to support the Sailors when they come to Hong Kong. In addition to the U.S. Navy, we also support visiting British, Austrailian and Canadian ships among others."

Wong encourages visiting Sailors to take every opportunity to immerse themselves in Hong Kong.

"Beyond the services at Fenwick Pier, Hong Kong is one of the best cities not just in the Western Pacific but also in the world and the Sailors have the opportunity to enjoy themselves, see the sights and get a taste of a cosmopolitan asian city," said Wong.

The employees at Ship Support Office Hong Kong work to ensure that Sailors have a memorable visit while receiving the best possible logistics service.

"From a quality of life perspective we want them to experience as much as they can. From a logistics perspective, we hope that they get the best customer service and, the best quality service," said Wong.

As an additional service to each visiting ship, Ship Support Office Hong Kong provides all of the port and liberty information so Sailors know what to expect before they arrive.

"We really try to consolidate all the information so they are ready to go have fun," said Wong. "We hope that they enjoy Hong Kong because it's a great city. We also want Sailors to take advantage of this chance to experience something different."

Wong recommends visiting the various markets for shopping, taking a harbor tour and says Victoria Peak is a must see sight of Hong Kong.

"On a clear day you have one of the best views of the city; especially at night because you can see all of the lights of the city. It is definately a must-see sight."

Faces of FISC

Postal Clerk 3rd Class Ronald Lee Murray III explains the proper procedure for filing out a customs form.
Photo by Blake Vives

Where are your from?
Goldsboro, North Carolina

What brought you to Japan?
I always wanted to visit Japan and this is where the Navy needed me.

Where do you recommend visiting in Japan?
I would recommend climbing Mount Fuji.

Why should someone climb Mount Fuji?
It's a once in a lifetime experience. You really accomplish something by climbing one of the highest mountains in the world. Also, the view from the top is extremely beautiful.

What is your life motto?
Don't wait for the opportunity, make it happen.

FISC volunteers deliver smiles to St. Joseph's Children's Home

Story and photo by Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

Little Koyumi Hoshi's eyes lit up as she clapped with excitement when Santa Claus appeared to greet the children of St. Joseph's Children's Home. With a bright smile on her face, she eagerly ran and jumped in Santa's lap when it was her turn to receive her present.

Bringing holiday cheer to the children and nuns of the St. Joseph Children's Home in Tokyo is a holiday tradition for some volunteers from the U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka. Collecting and delivering donated gifts of toys, clothes, shoes and food to these less-fortunate children is an exciting and rewarding annual event for the volunteers and children alike.

The jolly laughter of St. Nick brightened the faces of the more than 60 young residents of the St. Joseph Children's Home as the gifts arrived. Children took turns visiting with Santa Claus and receiving their gifts, which were carefully selected and wrapped specifically for them by FISC families who volunteered to sponsor a child. Santa even brought gifts to employees of the St. Joseph Children's Home for all of their hard work during the year.

"I am not certain who gets more out of the visits, the less-fortunate children who reside at the home and have the opportunity to meet Santa and spend a day with their new found American friends or the volunteers," said volunteer Ray Denny, who knows Santa quite well.

Following Santa's gifts, the children also received an additional donation of toys from Marines of the Semper Fi Society as a part of the donations collected at Yokosuka Naval Base for the Toys for Tots program. The St. Joseph Children's Home was one of the many facilities for less-fortunate children throughout Japan to receive visits from the sharply dressed Marines.

"I think it's a blessing that we have been given an opportunity - that most people, even those in the military, wouldn't have, to come out during the (holiday) season to this part of the world and interact in the way that we [do]," said Semper Fi Society volunteer Lance Cpl. Poeston Owens.

The children performed Christmas songs in Japanese and English to express their gratitude for the Christmas party. Volunteers even prepared a complete lunch including hamburgers, hot dogs, burritos, soup, turkey, cake and ice cream. After lunch, the children and volunteers played games in the courtyard and renewed the friendships they formed during previous visits.

Santa Claus visits with Koyumi Hoshi from the St. Joseph Children's Home in Tokyo. Volunteers from FISC Yokosuka brought gifts, lunch and played games with the children as a part of the annual Christmas party they coordinate for the more than 60 residents of the St. Joseph Children's Home.

The St. Joseph Children's Christmas party organizer Chief Storekeeper Marco Martinez was inspired by the hard work and dedication of the volunteers.

"This has been a very humbling experience for me, being part of a group of Sailors who were willing to step up to the plate and make a difference," said Martinez.

The time spent finding sponsors to purchase gifts for the children, collecting the donations and taking the long bus ride to Tokyo, are all labors of love for the volunteers. To them, the smiles of the children were all the reward they needed.

"I just look forward to seeing the looks on their faces when they get the presents," said Owens as he awaited the arrival of the children during his first visit to the St. Joseph Children's Home.

The volunteers from FISC welcome participation from the Yokosuka community in their efforts to better the lives of the children at the home.

"[We hope more volunteers] come on out and give some of their time up for the children in need. It's a great opportunity. If you get the chance, take it, [interacting with the children at the St. Joseph Children's Home] is a great time," said Semper Fi Society and St. Joseph Children's Christmas party volunteer Cpl. Joseph Niesen.

The volunteers plan to return to the St. Joseph Children's Home this summer for a beautification project to improve the grounds. Anyone in the Yokosuka community is welcome to join this team of volunteers. To participate or for more information, contact Chief Marco Martinez at 080-6628-6938.

Originally established in 1946 to support children orphaned during World War II, the mission of the St. Joseph Children's Home, according to official translated literature, is to provide shelter to children ages two to 18 who need a supportive environment and raise them based on the Roman Catholic Church's principals to become self-reliant, valuable Japanese citizens.