Message to CFAY motorists: "Just be patient, we'll get to you"

Story and photo by MCSN Mike Mulcare, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

The loud sounds coming from the engines and tailpipes of cars, trucks and scooters fill the early morning air as Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) comes to life. A frantic pulse of Sailors, family members, civilian and Japanese employees flows through the base's Womble gate. A tall man clad in a woodland camouflage uniform stands in the intersection, waving his hands and blowing a whistle; it's his job to keep the morning traffic rush flowing smoothly and accident-free.

Master-at-Arms 1st Class (SW) James Guthrie of Wichita Falls, Texas, is one of several CFAY traffic control officers who guides the daily morning passage of more than 200 pedestrians and 2,000 vehicles through the intersection of Sampson Avenue and Nimitz Boulevard.

"If no one came to guide traffic, this would be a real cluster, because a lot of people are trying to get to work in a hurry and get that good parking spot," said Guthrie. "Without us being here there would be a lot of traffic accidents and maybe a pedestrian would get hit."

Guiding traffic on base is a necessary safety precaution and an important duty bestowed on a few select master-at-arms. For Guthrie, the hectic ballet of directing vehicular traffic, impatient motorists and pedestrians can be a rewarding task.

"To me it's rewarding, because I'm allowing people to get to work safely and letting the pedestrians cross the street so they can get to work on time," said Guthrie. "My favorite cars to stop are the ones speeding through here. I like to stop them and make them sit and think about what they're doing," said Guthrie.

The daunting job of guiding traffic is also a hazardous one. Nearly every month, crossing guards in the U.S. are hit by distracted or inattentive drivers. Last month a crossing guard in Little Ferry, N.J. was struck and killed by a car. Guthrie said that earlier in his career, he witnessed some hazards of the job first-hand.

"A lady didn't see me. I was directing her to make a right turn and she took it too wide and hit me," said Guthrie. "I wasn't hurt but I was a little scraped up from it."

MA1(SW) James Guthrie, of Wichita Falls, Texas, directs traffic at Womble gate on board Yokosuka Base Feb. 4. Guthrie is one of several CFAY traffic control officers who guides the daily morning passage of more than 200 pedestrians and 2,000 vehicles through the intersection of Sampson Avenue and Nimitz Boulevard.

With nearly four years of traffic control experience under his belt, Guthrie offers a few sincere words of advice to local motorist in a hurry to get through the gate and onto the base.

"Just be patient - we'll get to you," he said.

Online ombudsman program information assists commanders

By Bruce Moody, CNIC FFSC Program

The Navy Ombudsman Program now offers online information and support through the Ombudsman Program Command Leadership Toolkit.

"This toolkit is one-stop shopping for commanders. It's ideal for the commander who does not yet have an ombudsman and needs to know what steps to take to get started." – MCPON(SS/SW) Rick West
U.S. Navy file photo by MC1 Jennifer A. Villalovos

Navy ombudsmen are professionally trained information and referral volunteers who serve as a vital two-way communication link between the command and family members. The program enhances the exchange of information and ideas between leadership of the command and the family members of those serving within the unit.

An Ombudsman Program Command Leadership Toolkit was recently launched to enable command leadership to more fully and effectively support their command Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

The Toolkit includes program information, checklists and forms to assist the command with all aspects of the Ombudsman Program including selection, appointment, and support of command ombudsman.

"This toolkit is one-stop shopping for commanders," said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)(SS/SW) Rick West. "It's ideal for the commander who does not yet have an ombudsman and needs to know what steps to take to get started."

Also available is a new group page on Facebook called U.S. Navy Ombudsman Program Discussion Group. This group allows ombudsmen, commanding officers and certified ombudsman trainers to discuss best practices, program news and information. This page is available at http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=242277432495. Access to this page is limited to those who are listed in the Ombudsman Registry, http://www.ombudsmanregistry.org.

"Ombudsmen who are not in the registry need to sign up because the registry is a prime source of communication and program information for our ombudsmen to keep the lines of communication open between commands and families," said West. "When our families respond to challenges of deployments or family emergencies, our ombudsmen are there providing guidance and helping families regain a sense of normalcy while promoting resiliency and self-reliance."

The registry was established by Task Force Navy Family in August 2005 in response to the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast region. Its initial purpose was to communicate directly with ombudsmen and determine what is needed for Sailors and Navy families to respond and recover from a natural disaster.

Recent upgrades give review authorization and direct communication to Type I and Type II commanders to review commands that fall under their area of responsibility. Review authority is also available to fleet and force master chiefs.

In addition, West will be able to send real-time updates and information to commanders/command designees, ombudsmen, and ombudsman coordinators so that they can keep Navy families up-to-date on resources, information, and program changes.

"Our ombudsmen work tirelessly to improve the readiness of commands and the lives of our Sailors and Navy families," said West. "I am proud to be associated with the extraordinary people volunteering as Ombudsmen, and prouder still of their service at this critical time in our nation's history. We owe it to all our Navy families to continue supporting the Ombudsman Program."

The Ombudsman Program Command Leadership Toolkit is located on the Fleet and Family Support Program Web site https://www.nffsp.org/skins/nffsp/home.aspx.

The toolkit is organized into eight main sections including a section containing customizable Word documents. The first seven sections each have a principal document which describes essential information on that particular topic. From each principal document there are links to supporting documentation such as checklists, further information and forms. The eight sections are:

- Command leadership need-to-knows
- Before appointing an ombudsman
- Appointing an ombudsman
- Ombudsman registry
- Ongoing support of ombudsman
- Resources
- Ombudsman welcome packet
- Customizable Microsoft Word files

The Ombudsman Program Command Leadership Toolkit is provided for your information as a service of the CNIC Fleet and Family Support Program. The toolkit is also available on disc.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the disc, commanders can contact their local Fleet and Family Support Centers. Reserve commanding officers can obtain a copy by contacting their family support administrator at the regional component command.

TRICARE University offers online education

By Lora Sanders-VanNoy, TRICARE Pacific Marketing Representative

Are you new to the military and eager to learn about your health care benefits? Or perhaps you are seasoned but want to keep up with the latest changes? TRICARE University offers free online courses that can be completed at your convenience at www.tricare.mil/tricareu.

There are three different online courses available. The TRICARE Public Course will provide the quickest and easiest way to get a general overview and basic knowledge of TRICARE programs. There is no registration for this course and it is accessible to anyone who wants to know more about TRICARE.

The TRICARE Fundamentals Course is much more in-depth. Topics covered include TRICARE eligibility, TRICARE plans and programs and online resources. Registration is needed for this course and for those that pass the test at the end of the course, a certificate will be issued.

A third course is also available to members of the selected reserve who want to know more about TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS). This course can assist those interested in the premium-based health care plan.

Knowledge is power and there has never been a better way to learn about or keep up with your health care benefits than through TRICARE University. Visit www.tricare.mil for more information.