Ikego residents join Japanese neighbors for annual party

Story and photo by Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Ikego residents were treated to a day of Japanese culture and the opportunity for international friendship at the 13th annual Ikego *Mochi* Pounding Party compliments of the Japan-America Society of Zushi and Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Ikego Housing Detachment Feb. 7.

As a long time standard bearer for New Year's festivities in Japan, *mochi* pounding played a central role at the party. *Mochitsuki* or *mochi* pounding is a process in which cooked glutinous rice is pounded by an individual with a heavy wooden mallet called a *Kine*, while a second person folds and wets the rice in between mallet blows.

But, expanding on the traditional New Year celebration of *mochi* pounding, organizers introduced residents to a wide variety of traditional Japanese activities which included authentic tea ceremonies, wearing kimono, *koto* (harp) and *shakuhachi* (flute) musical instrument performances and traditional Japanese food.

Originally billed as an event to showcase Japanese culture to Americans, it has become a staple of CFAY local community relations programs. Ikego resident Julia Weidner described her appreciation for the event and how it has helped her family integrate into Japanese society.

"I'm so appreciative that [Japan-America Society of Zushi] put this on," said Weidner. "It allows us to understand more about their culture…it's an easy way to interact with the local Japanese people."

Lt. Robert Girga from Commander Task Force (CTF) 70 swings a *Kine* during the 13th annual Ikego *Mochi* Pounding Party Feb. 7. In addition to *mochi* pounding, families were treated to a day of Japanese culture and the opportunity for international friendship compliments of the Japan-America Society of Zushi and CFAY Ikego Housing Detachment.

During the opening ceremony for the event, CFAY Ikego Housing Detachment Officer in Charge Lt. Cmdr. Helen Murphy, discussed the importance of this event and the continuing positive relationship the Japan-America Society of Zushi builds between Americans and local residents.

"It has been 13 years since the April 1996 opening day of this housing area," said Murphy. "From well before then, the Zushi Japan-America Society has been playing a key and vital role in cultivating the close relationships currently enjoyed by the American residents and citizens of Zushi city."

In addition to Ikego residents and organizers, the event featured, Zushi City Vice Mayor Susumu Ito, Zushi City Council Vice Chairperson Takeshi Takano, Zushi City Military Liaison Office Section Chief Takashi Yamada, Tatsuji Arai on behalf of House of Representative member Jun Hayashi and many other local dignitaries.

The Japan-America Society of Zushi is a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization that offers educational, cultural and business programs about Japan and the U.S.-Japan relationship to the general public through membership and programs.

Yokosuka Safety Office efforts pay off: 2008 traffic accidents significantly reduced

Story and photo by MC2 Byron C. Linder, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Safety Office added another feather to its cap of accomplishments Feb. 11, thanks to a successful training program that contributed to 111 fewer motorcycle and off-duty motor vehicle incidents in fiscal year 2008.

A February message from the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Gary Roughead, addressed the response to an increase in the number of Sailors injured or killed on motorcycles. The Navy implemented changes to identify motorcycle riders and ensure they had the proper training, which has resulted in a fleet wide 50 percent reduction in safety incidents.

"We've reduced our traffic accidents over the past several years significantly," said Adrian Marsh, CFAY traffic safety manager. "I attribute this to the educational services provided by Cape Fox (Professional Services), our awareness training, and all the different training avenues we provide to the different commands. We're required to do certain levels of training for all drivers and motorcycle riders, and we enhance that with command-specific training upon request."

A motorcyclist drives onto CFAY, donned in full safety gear as required by instruction. Thanks to training efforts by the base Safety Office, CFAY successfully reduced its number of off-duty motorcycle and recreational vehicle accidents in fiscal year 2008.

Cape Fox Professional Services provides the Navy and Marine Corps with traffic safety and recreational off-duty safety program training. Douglas Knight, a Cape Fox instructor, cited the unique hazards of Japan traffic being a prime reason for specialized training.

"Japan is a very crowded place. It's a high-risk place to ride a motorcycle with the biggest hazards being other drivers and our own riding skills," said Knight. "We've reduced accidents and deaths here in Japan dramatically over the past three to five years."

Knight said a 2005 regional instruction limiting new riders to a 400cc maximum engine size dramatically decreased the number of accidents for Yokosuka Sailors. While different bases have different regulations regarding the licensing process, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan requires a certain amount of mileage on base, the completion of certain courses and a ride test to get an off-base license for stateside-licensed riders.

"Before people can get a license, they have to complete a recent course." said Knight. "We add in local area hazards like motorcycles riding up the left side of the road and how crowded it is here."

Knight said the small time investment in the safety classes have significant payoffs on multiple levels, including ensuring future readiness for the forward-deployed naval forces.

"When there's a reduction in accidents, there's a reduction in lost work time," he said. "We're getting more and more requests for driver's training. This type of training will help us reduce accidents and get drivers to learn to see more. Simple things like taking one more second to consider the action they're about to take will help reduce accidents dramatically."

Electronic service record accounts mandated fleetwide

By NPC Public Affairs

The Chief of Navy Personnel released a NAVADMIN Feb. 5 announcing the requirement for all active-duty and reserve personnel to establish and maintain a self-service electronic service record (ESR) account within the next 60 days.

"Having a self-service account is necessary for updating emergency contact information. Self-service accounts contain other important features, such as enabling Sailors to directly submit PCS (permanent change of station) travel claims upon PCS transfer, update race, ethnicity and religion information, and view all other ESR service record information," said Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson, chief of naval personnel in NAVADMIN 043/09.

The requirement date for Sailors serving at sea and without connectivity to establish an ESR is 60 days upon return to homeport.

The Navy first implemented ESRs in 2006. The ESR provides individual Sailors, Personnel Support Activity Detachments (PSD), personnel offices holding service records, Navy Operational Support Centers and customer commands of PSDs, with secure worldwide Internet access to personnel, training and awards data.

The ESR replaces the paper service record as the single field level data entry point for service record maintenance. Commands are required to use all available ESR functionality.

Self-service accounts can be created at https://nsips.nmci.navy.mil or on the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS) ESR server on board ship.

Commanding officers, executive officers and command master chiefs can obtain command level view only access by completing the NSIPS/ESR system authorization request and contacting their local NSIPS area manager. This access provides the user view only capability for all ESR accounts within their UIC(s).

All commands responsible for service record entries are required to initiate updates in NSIPS ESR, however official military personnel file requirements remain unchanged.