Block party helps community recognize Hispanic Heritage Month

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Members of the local community got to experience a little Latin culture during a Salsa Block Party Event hosted by Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Division here Sept. 25.

The event, which was held in the parking lot adjacent to the bowling center, was sponsored by MWR in observance of National Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

"It recognizes Hispanic Heritage Month for all the Hispanics and Latin-Americans on the base," said MWR Entertainment Director Earl Murray.

Though it had been a while since MWR first held the event, members of the local community rekindled interest in it.

"We held this approximately seven years ago, so we brought it back… we had people asking for it," said Murray.

Though the event was in recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month, it was not exclusive to Hispanics, it was meant for the entire local community to enjoy.

"These are big community get-togethers," said Murray. "We call it a block party because it's for the community; it gives them something different to do on a Saturday night. It's alright to go out in town, but there is a lot to do on the base and people just don't realize sometimes."

During the event, there were Hispanic foods served, an outdoor bar, a dance floor, a disc jockey and live, Latin music performed by Son Rienas, which is an all Japanese-female Latin music band.

Son Rienas, which is an all Japanese-female Latin music band, performs during a Salsa Block Party held here Sept. 25. The MWR-sponsored event held in recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, also included Hispanic foods, an outdoor bar, dance floor and live disc jockey.

MWR also supplied air toys, a blindfold, stick and piñatas as entertainment for the youth who attended.

"The music is excellent; the group is excellent. I think it's really good," said U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka Associate Director of Surgical Services Cmdr. Luis Acevedo, who is originally from Puerto Rico. "I think this a great time; the camaraderie; everybody's having fun; you can bring your family, this is a safe place to come to."

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period to what it is now. It was enacted into law Aug. 17, 1988, on the approval of Public Law 100-402.

The day of Sept. 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days Sept. 16 and Sept. 18 respectively. Also, Columbus Day or *Dia de la Raza*, which is Oct. 12, falls within this 30-day period.

U.S. Naval Academy alumni reunite in Yokosuka after year hiatus

Story and photo by Brett English, USNA Alumni Association, Tokyo Bay Chapter

The Tokyo Bay Chapter of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association is making a comeback after a year-long hiatus. More than 25 graduates gathered recently at the Officer's Club here to reconnect, share food, drink and great stories of years past.

Some stories were more recent than others, as evidenced by a large turnout from the graduating classes of 2009 and 2010, now serving onboard *USS Mustin* (DDG 89) and *USS Stethem* (DDG 63).

Notable graduates in attendance were Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Force 5th and 7th Fleet Rear Adm. Sean Buck and Naval Facilities Engineering Command Commanding Officer Capt. Robert McLean, both from the class of 1983, and *Mustin* Commanding Officer Cmdr. Michael V. Misiewicz and *Stethem* Commanding Officer Cmdr. Hank Adams.

Vice President of the Chapter, Cmdr. Andy Gibbons, who is the Officer in Charge of Space and Naval Warfare Systems Facility Pacific, Yokosuka, Japan, kicked off the evening with some brief comments.

"We haven't had an event in a while," Gibbons said. "One of the main purposes for having this event is not only to get everyone together and have fun, but also breathe life back into the organization."

With a majority of the fleet currently at sea, future growth of the chapter looks promising when many graduates return to Japan later this year.

Buck commented that there was plenty of interest from members of Commander Air Wing 5, currently deployed on *USS George Washington* (CVN 73).

In the past, the Tokyo Bay Chapter has maintained one of the largest active duty contingents of any chapter worldwide. It is also important to point out that a significant number of area graduates have since retired or separated from the service and are now working in Japan in both the private and public sectors.

U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association, Tokyo Bay Chapter members and guests pose for a group photo at the Officer's Club Sept. 17. After a year-long hiatus, alumni members got together to reconnect, share food, drink and great stories of years past.

If you are a graduate, or someone who is interested in the activities of the Naval Academy and the Alumni Association, contact Brett English, chapter president and class of 2000, by e-mail to tokyobaychapter@gmail.com.