FISC Hispanic-American Heritage program celebrates diversity

By H. Sam Samuelson, FISC Yokosuka Office of Corporate Communication

An all-volunteer multi-cultural committee with Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC), Yokosuka, staged its annual Hispanic American Heritage event Oct. 15, combining song, dance and inspirational notes to commemorate the annual celebration.

The event was highlighted by the inspirational words of guest speaker, FISC Operations Officer Cmdr. Jose Sanchez, who capped his speech with an acapella rendition of a classic Hispanic childhood song: "Las Mananitas," which means "The Little Morning," the Mexican birthday song.

Sanchez's speech focused on heritage, diversity, integrity and honor (a renewed hope for America) and on Navy contributions by both popular and some lesser known Hispanic figures who contributed to the Navy's historical successes – such as Admiral David Farragut, who became the U.S. Navy's first vice admiral in 1864 and four-star admiral in 1866; and Edward Hidalgo, who in 1979 was the first Hispanic Secretary of the Navy.

Other U.S. Navy Hispanic figures noted in the ceremony included: Cmdr. Yvette Gonzales, first Latina to command a surface combatant; Lt. Al Cisneros, the first Latino to serve with the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels; and Capt. Marion Frederick Ramirez de Arellano, the first Hispanic skipper of a submarine, and recipient of two Silver Stars.

For Sanchez, a somewhat more meaningful portion of his speech was devoted to his current command.

"This is my second tour in Japan; obviously, I like it here. And, really, when I think about our host country, our relations with the Japanese and my own experiences with the Japanese here at FISC, I can definitely appreciate the greater meaning of diversity and how important it is in our modern and increasingly diverse world," Sanchez said.

(Left) FISC Yokosuka Multi-cultural Heritage committee members SH1 Showandra Williams, LS1 Zoila Pacheco, SHSN Tiffany Midkiff and LSSN Brittany Davis prepare to perform a Latin folk dance during the FISC Yokosuka Hispanic American Heritage celebration Oct. 15.

Photo by Yohsuke Onda

"For me, it's not only about celebrating Hispanic American heritage – of course, this is an important recognition event – but American diversity overall and our country's movement toward more understanding of its diverse cultures," he said.

"History is an open window to a challenging past," Sanchez added. "But, I think it's clear that we all understand the better value of acceptance and embrace of multiple cultures. And we understand that coming together makes us much more resourceful as a group. I see that every day at FISC."

Sanchez's remarks were preceded by a Tanguillo-style Latin folk dance and historical readings. The celebration was officiated by FISC Executive Officer Cmdr. Ed Butzirus.

"I think, by now, we all know collectively how valuable diversity is in the Navy, Navy Supply and here at FISC Yokosuka," Butzirus said. "Ceremonies like this give us another great opportunity, not just to celebrate Hispanic Americans and their historically important contributions to our Navy and our country, but recognition of our overall diversity as well. It gives us an opportunity to celebrate the benefits we gain from the ingenuity that cultural diversity provides us to complete our mission and serve our customers."

The executive officer also shared a personal side to his appreciation for Hispanic American Heritage recognition: his wife, Michelle, was born in El Salvador and, after living her formative years in California, returned to El Salvador at age 12 and resided there for one year.

"This celebration does have a personal side," Butzirus said. "So I think I'm in an enviable position to speak first-hand about the value of Hispanic Americans and, even more, diversity."

National Women of Color Awards showcase commitment to STEM

By Lt. Laura K. Stegherr, Diversity Directorate Public Affairs

The National Women of Color (WOC) Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Conference in Dallas, honored 16 uniformed and civilian Navy women Oct. 29-30.

Sponsored by Career Communications Group (CCG) Inc., the 15th anniversary conference drew more than 1,200 participants, ranging from distinguished scientists and engineers to senior executives from industry, academia and government.

"Minority women are playing an increasingly responsible role in shaping our technology today," said CCG Inc. Chairman and CEO Tyrone D. Taborn. "This conference is designed to provide long-overdue recognition of some of America's most distinguished women in technology and business, who just happen to be women of color."

The conference also included several award ceremonies which honored women who demonstrate excellence in the STEM fields, leadership in the workplace and the community, work as role models and mentors and commitment to recruiting and retaining minorities in the nation's scientific and technical enterprises.

The Navy Medicine Support Command commander and director of the Navy's Medical Service Corps, Rear Adm. Eleanor Valentin, received the WOC's top award of Technologist of the Year at the awards gala.

"While I'm honored and thankful [to receive this award], I am getting credit for the work of the people of Navy Medicine Support Command," said Valentin. "The 4,300 professionals I am privileged to lead work day and night to help ensure the health and readiness of our war fighters who serve in harm's way to defend our freedom."

Six Navy members were recipients of the WOC 2010 Technology All-Star Award, which recognized women who excelled professionally and demonstrated leadership in the workplace. Awardees included Katrina Mansfield, CH-53K Heavy Lift Helicopter Data, Displays and Cockpit Avionics systems project engineer at Naval Air Systems Command; Burvis Robinson, supervisory management analyst at Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC); Andrea Freeman, command information officer at NAVFAC Far East; Voka Stokes, management analyst and training officer at Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command Atlantic; Chief Hospital Corpsman Colleen Ramsay; and Chief Musician Amy K. Jarjoura, of the Naval Academy.

CCG is an organization that aims to promote significant minority achievement in engineering, science and technology through such events as the WOC awards, the Black Engineer of the Year Awards (BEYA) and the Minorities in Research Science Awards.

The Navy has maintained a sustained relationship with CCG and with the annual BEYA Awards for the last 20 years.

NAVFAC FE Command Information Officer Andrea Freeman was a recipient of the Women of Color 2010 Technology All-Star Award presented during a conference held in Dallas Oct. 29-30.

Photo by Ron Inman