Japanese, Americans exchange food, culture during first event

Story and photo by Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Citizens of the United States and Japan came together Nov. 20 to learn about the cultures and traditions of the two countries during the first official event since the grand opening of the new Japan – U.S. Cultural Exchange Center (CEC) on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY).

(Left) MM3 Andrew Carpenter speaks to the Japanese crowd during the first event held at the recently opened Japan-U.S. Cultural Exchange Center on board CFAY Nov. 20. Carpenter was one of several CFAY Sailors and civilians who participated in the event in which Americans taught Japanese participants about the Thanksgiving holiday while Japanese people taught the Americans about the art of origami.

The event brought together American and Japanese guests as they learned about various national customs of both countries. In addition to a multitude of conversations stemming from the main topic, Americans treated the Japanese to a lesson on Thanksgiving while Japanese citizens taught the finer points of the art of origami or paper folding.

CFAY Public Affairs Officer Michelle Stewart led the Thanksgiving discussion and prepared a number of traditional holiday foods such as sweet potato pie for the event.

"The goal today was to help local citizens learn more about a uniquely American holiday like Thanksgiving," said Stewart. "We have put a lot of effort into teaching our Sailors and family members about Japanese traditions and thought that maybe some of the local Japanese people would like to learn more about American traditions."

Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Kendra Williams, a Sailor attached to CFAY who took part in the event while standing watch in the new CEC, liked the exchange of cultural information that took place during the event.

"It was a very pleasant exchange," said Williams. "We let them know how we celebrate Thanksgiving and how it came about and they gave us information on how they celebrate their holidays."

The approximately 30 guests in attendance listened while Americans explained the history of Thanksgiving while finding similarities to their own society.

"It's not just American culture, [Japanese people] have to be thankful for everything we have," said Junko Nakajima, a Japanese participant who lives in Yokosuka.

Nakajima further explained how she is thankful for the CEC and the opportunities it will bring local residents.

"I really think it's great," she said. "I think there are many Japanese people who want to be friends with American Navy people, so I hope this is going to be a good place to communicate…I hope Yokosuka city citizens and Navy families become more friendly."

According to Nakajima, her hope is to have the opportunity to meet American women who are housewives like her so she can teach them more about Japan. But today, she had only one question on her mind.

"I was just wondering how big [an American] turkey is?"

The CEC is open Mondays through Thursdays from 1 to 6 p.m. and on Fridays for special events. Visit the CEC for more information.

Ikego residents don costumes, participate in historical celebration

Story and photo by Dan Bowen, CFAY Public Affairs

Volunteers from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) participated in the 18th annual *Yabusame* and Period Costume Parade hosted by the Zushi City Society of Commerce and Industry in Zushi city Nov. 22.

The event began with a parade that featured the volunteers and local residents dressed in the full regalia of samurai warriors of 12th century Japan. The parade started at the Kamegaoka shrine located adjacent to Zushi City Hall and wound through the heart of the city down to Zushi Beach. Once at the beach, spectators and participants were treated to a *yabusame* demonstration. *Yabusame* is a type of traditional Japanese archery where archers shoot at wooden targets while riding a horse at full gallop.

Yabusame demonstrations between Zushi residents and U.S. military personnel serving in the area go back to the end of World War II. "When U.S. forces occupied the Nagisa Hotel in Zushi in 1945, they practiced *yabusame* on the beach," said Ikego Community Relations Specialist Michiko Kamioka.

Kaneko Yurin, an instructor for the Takeda School of Yabusame, demonstrated his skills for military personnel in the area. After witnessing the demonstration, the personnel decided to try it on their own and built a temporary shooting gallery to practice. In 1948, the first U.S.-Japan Friendship Yabusame Archery Competition was held.

Although there were no U.S. personnel taking part in the archery demonstration this year, the event once again proved to be a great way for Zushi residents and the CFAY community to engage with each other.

"Ikego residents were very excited to participate in such a Japanese cultural event and [local residents] would like to get more Americans involved," said Kamioka.

Joanna Leung, an Ikego resident who dressed as an *onna-musha*, or female warrior, in the parade was especially appreciative of having the chance to connect with her local community. "It's an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that you can only find in Japan," said Leung. "It's wonderful."

The parade is just one of many cultural exchanges CFAY and local residents engage in throughout the year. From open-base events to origami and flower arrangement lessons at community centers, the relationship between CFAY personnel and their hosts can only be strengthened by residents becoming more involved in the many intercultural activities that are available to them.

"It's an amazing experience to be out amongst the people and in their culture," said Karrie Skelton, a CFAY resident who also dressed as a female warrior in the parade. "The only way you will learn [about Japanese culture] is if you get into it and have fun with it."

CFAY resident Karrie Skelton, dressed as an *onna-musha* or female warrior, marches in the Period Costume Parade hosted by the Zushi City Society of Commerce and Industry in Zushi city Nov. 22.