Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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USO Cookie Caravan spreads holiday spirit to single Sailors

Story and photos by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

The Yokosuka United Service Organizations (USO) helped spread the holiday spirit here with its third annual USO Cookie Caravan Dec. 13-15.

"This year it's sponsored by Betty Crocker," said USO Yokosuka Center Operations Manager Jason Rouse. "They donated 420 bags of cookie mix to us. [These] bags of cookies will make more than 10,000 cookies for us to bag and pass out to single and unaccompanied Sailors."

The cookies were baked by volunteers from the Yokosuka base community.

(Left) Yokosuka Middle School (YMS) eight-grade student Charlie Yarrell, YMS Family Consumer Sciences Teacher Louise Mueller and YMS eight-grade student Kaila Torres prepare cookie dough for baking Dec. 9. The USO Cookie Caravan distributed the baked cookies to Sailors throughout the base.

"The students at Yokosuka Middle School actually picked up 73 bags of cookie [mix], and when it's all said and done, that makes about 1,700 cookies," said Rouse. "So, essentially one out of every five cookies we pass out was made by someone at the middle school. The rest of the [bags of cookie mix] were picked up by a hodgepodge of volunteers."

According to the official USO website, the USO was formed in 1941 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt combined the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board to form the USO, with the objective of providing the emotional support the troops needed.

Over time, the USO evolved and developed new programs and services to meet the changing needs of troops and their families.

"We know being forward-deployed in Japan is difficult," said Rouse. "So, for the single and unaccompanied personnel, the ones who won't have a chance to go home, or won't have a home to go to here locally and might not have a chance to partake in homemade cookies, or any other goodies around Christmas time, we like to do something specifically for them, give them a taste of home around Christmas, put a smile on their faces and let them know that somebody out there is thinking about them and cares."

USO Yokosuka Center Operations Manager Jason Rouse hands out home baked cookies to Sailors on the *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) mess deck Dec. 15, as part of the third annual USO Cookie Caravan.

USS Shiloh (CG 67) Machinery Repairman 1st Class (SW) Samuel Landis was on hand to escort USO representatives aboard the ship to pass out cookies and stated that he feels the Cookie Caravan is a positive event.

"Being forward-deployed, a lot of us are away from friends and family this time of year, so every little bit of something that comes from a home, definitely lifts the sprits of the crew, and we appreciate that," said Landis.

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JMSDF Second Service School honors departing English teachers

By Coreen Endo-Davis, Seahawk contributor

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) honored three Yokosuka base spouses Dec. 2, for their efforts teaching English to JMSDF officers and sailors.

JMSDF Second Service School superintendant Rear Adm. Tsutomu Anzai presented letters of appreciation to Elizabeth Goodwin, Mary Njuguna and Kimberly Gibbons at a ceremony and cultural event at the campus in Taura.

According to the appreciation letters presented, the three English teachers were honored for "contributing to the development and improvement of the school's English education… and furthering the close relationship between the United States and Japan."

"You have given our students opportunities to experience firsthand American traditions, and have motivated them to learn a lot more," said Anzai. "What you teach here will be an asset to them and have a lasting good influence on our relationship with the United States."

The Second Service School provides professional and technical education to JMSDF personnel in the areas of engineering, damage control, repair, intelligence, information systems and foreign language. Many of the students study English en route to assignments abroad.

"This has been a deeply rewarding experience for me," said Goodwin, who is leaving Yokosuka with her family for a new assignment in the United States. "It has given me the opportunity to work with so many outstanding students and staff, and has broadened my understanding of Japanese culture."

Goodwin served as the chairperson of the school's American Instructor Group, which consists of about 15 Yokosuka spouses who work part-time teaching English conversation to JMSDF students. The school hosts cross-cultural events for the instructors, including mochi pounding, cherry blossom viewing and the tea ceremony.

(Left) Yokosuka base spouses Mary Njuguna, Elizabeth Goodwin and Kimberly Gibbons pose with their husbands and the letters of appreciation they received from (right) JMSDF Second Service School Commandant Rear Adm. Tsutomo Anzai at a ceremony held at the campus Dec. 2, to honor their efforts in teaching English to JMSDF officers and sailors.

Photo courtesy of JMSDF

Since the program's inception in 1959, there has been more than 530 spouses from Yokosuka base who have taught English at the JMSDF Second Service School.

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7th Fleet Band performs first concert on Miyakojima

The 7th Fleet Band performed its first-ever concert on the southern island of Miyakojima, Japan, before a sold-out crowd at the Matida Civic Center Dec. 12.

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CFAY hosts Region Japan Sailor of the Year luncheon

Sailor of the Year (SOY) finalists from installations throughout CNRJ were honored at the CNRJ 2011 SOY luncheon ceremony held here Dec. 16.

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