Japanese college students tour Yokosuka base, talk with Sailors

Story and photo by MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

The U.S. Embassy Tokyo and Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan organized and hosted a tour of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka for 11 Japanese university students Aug. 12.

The selected students were given tours of the Center for Naval Engineering and Afloat Training Group Western Pacific as part of a community outreach program.

"The goal of the outreach program is to show what kind of work is done on base and what kind of life American service members lead," said Noyuri Mitsuhashi, cultural affairs assistant at U.S. Embassy Tokyo. "Though we only brought 11 students on base today, we hope they will share what they learned to a broader audience and give them a better idea of what Americans are doing in Japan."

The students were given the opportunity to take photos and video footage of the tour, as well as interview Sailors on camera. Upon returning to their respective universities, the students can share their experiences with classmates, leading to a better understanding of the U.S. military way of life.

"Before getting a chance to talk with service members, I thought they stayed on base all the time and did training," said Mami Hioki an International Politics major at University of the Sacred Heart. "Coming to Yokosuka changed my opinion about the U.S. military, I see now that they are normal people with families and friends."

While touring the Center for Naval Engineering, the students were given a chance to handle Navy firefighting equipment and see how U.S. Sailors train for emergencies.

"Letting them see how we train and how committed we are to doing our job, shows us in a more positive light," said Master Chief Damage Controlman (SW/AW) David Singer, who offered his services as tour guide of the facility.

After speaking with several Sailors and asking them questions about where they are from, what they did on duty and during their free time, Hioki was able to relate to them.

"I was surprised to know some of the young Sailors even play the same video games and watch the same anime I do," said Hioki. "I found I could relate to them more than I would have imagined."

(Right) DCCM David Singer shows Riko Watanabe, a Japanese college student from Aoyama Gakuin University, how to operate a fire hose during a tour of the Center for Naval Engineering at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Aug. 12. Eleven students from various colleges toured the base and interviewed Sailors as part of a community outreach program to introduce young Japanese citizens to U.S. military culture and personnel living in Japan.

Mustangs mentor, brief Sailors on commissioning programs

Story and photo by MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Sailors from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka gathered Aug. 10 to learn about applying for the Limited Duty Officer (LDO) and Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) programs.

Numerous enlisted Sailors hoping to earn a commission attended the conference hosted by Capt. John Jones, CWO/LDO community manager. Jones said he hoped to educate attendees on the detailed procedures involved in the application process.

Jones advised attendees based on his own application experience. The points he drove home were preparing for the application process well ahead of time, making a strong personal statement that comes from the heart and persistence in applying if they didn't get picked up the first time.

CWOs and LDOs, sometimes known as "Mustangs," differ from other commissioned officers with their high level of technical expertise and experience gained as enlisted Sailors. They generally employ their skills and know-how as division or staff officers.

One local CWO, who gained program and technical expertise up to the chief ranks, constantly shares her knowledge and shared her story regarding the road to a commission.

"My first command was a ship forward-deployed to Japan and I had a bad experience and wanted to get out of the Navy," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Valarie P. Kelly, who earned her commission six months ago. "My division officer, a chief warrant officer, told me that all commands were different and with his encouragement I ended up reenlisting. After seeing the different opportunities the Navy had to offer, I set a goal to be more like him and ended up applying for the CWO program."

Capt. John Jones, chief warrant officer (CWO) and limited duty officer (LDO) community manager, briefs prospective CWOs and LDOs at the CFAY Community Readiness Center Aug. 10. Jones travels to Navy installations all over the world teaching Sailors about the benefits of and the process behind applying for and earning a commission.

Kelly, who is now the officer-in-charge at the Center for Information Dominance Learning Site Yokosuka, encourages Sailors under her command to take advantage of commissioning programs and sponsored three of her Sailors at the brief. Kelly also advises Sailors that it is never too early to start planning for the future.

For many of those in attendance, getting tips and procedural insight about how to earn a commission, is what filled seats at the briefing venue.

"I came here today to get on the track to LDO," said Personnel Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Fahtisha T. Harris. "I'm a new first class with nine years in service and I wanted to start the process as early as I could. This brief was a good opportunity to talk with the community manager, Capt. Jones. Most Sailors don't get the chance to get this information straight form Millington, Tenn. I am glad I could be here."