The vitality of community

By Chaplain Corey T. Thornton

One day, the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, had an epiphany. On a routine walk, he looked about at the people on the street around him and realized suddenly that he was connected to them and they were connected to one another.

Instead of seeing himself and those around him as just individuals he realized that he was apart of something much bigger than himself and that those around him formed one entity, one society, a community.

That we humans are connected to one another is certainly not an original idea from Merton. It has been expressed in a variety of ways in many of our world's religions and philosophies. But when Merton experienced it for himself, it became a new reality; a living truth, that forever changed his perspective on life.

Over these past few years, I have begun to have a realization of my own that I relate to Father Merton's, albeit much less profound to be sure. I have come to realize that communities are important and often times necessary to personal health. We all have communities to which we belong. Whether it's a military command, a religious congregation or a weekend sports team, living life in society necessitates involvement in community. And this is a good situation for us because we need one another to survive.

The question then is not whether or not we will be involved in community, rather, whether we will choose further involvement in communities and how we will choose to view them. Too often, I'm afraid; we've replaced our communities with internet chat rooms or by living vicariously through our favorite television shows. It seems that the more technologically advanced we become, the more ways we find to isolate ourselves from one another and from the communities we form. This is a problem because a lack of healthy involvement in community can lead to feelings of emptiness, loneliness and meaninglessness.

To see our communities as a means to realizing our connectivity to others is vital to a healthy life. Never could this be more important to realize than during the holiday season when opportunities to be involved in community abound. I sometimes see this at Christmas chapel services, when we get guests visiting for the first time. Many come looking for a way to fill the void left by their families back home. Others come to remember the communities that they celebrated with in Christmases past. Whether they are aware of it or not, they all come together to be apart of and to play a role in community.

Thomas Merton was right; we are each one connected to the other. We are one. Please remember this holiday season, in Yokosuka, Japan, that you are not alone; you are a unique member of humanity. And please consider over the holidays making an investment to be involved in community.

Seahawk Community Announcements and Article/Photo Submissions – Deadline for community announcements and article/photo submissions for the Seahawk is the Thursday before the next Seahawk edition. E-mail your submissions to Seahawk-Umitaka@fe.navy.mil. Include your telephone contact information in the body of the e-mail. E-mail to Seahawk-Umitaka@fe.navy.mil or call 243-2567/3003 for specific submission requirements or for more information.

Pet of the week

The Pet of the week this week is Leah. This gorgeous black calico is two years old and is by far one of the most even-keeled cats we've ever had. She's fine with other cats and children of all demeanor, and probably could even adjust to dogs (although we don't know for sure). She is looking for a home that would give her treats, attention and love forever. To find out more about Leah or any animal at Pets Are Worth Saving (P.A.W.S.), contact them at 243-9996, by e-mail to usskittytalk.yokosuka@gmail.com or visit the P.A.W.S. website at www.pawsyokosukajapan.com.

Photo courtesy of P.A.W.S.

SRF-JRMC apprentices talk "Japan" to Sullivans students

Story and photo by Steve Parker,
The Sullivans Elementary School Public Affairs

Japanese apprentices from Ship Repair Facility-Japan Regional Maintenance Center (SRF-JRMC) journeyed across the base Oct. 20, to talk and provide presentations to 4th-grade students from The Sullivans Elementary School on topics like Japanese sports, language and the tea ceremony.

The recently hired apprentices maintain and repair U.S. Navy ships at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka. The seven apprentices work in various SRF-JRMC shops such as electronics, painting, weapons, and calibration. As part of their training for these jobs, the apprentices study English from August until June. The first month being filled with very intensive, almost all-day sessions. After the first month, they study English in the morning and work in their respective shops in the afternoon. The classes are provided as part of their training by SRF-JRMC.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructor Bruce Swanland, from SRF-JRMC shop code 1150, comes from the Defense Language Institute in San Antonio. He laid the groundwork for the presentations by contacting the elementary school with the idea to give his language students a more immediate chance to use their language skills. The Sullivans Elementary School teachers Steve Parker and Mike Applegate took him up on his offer.

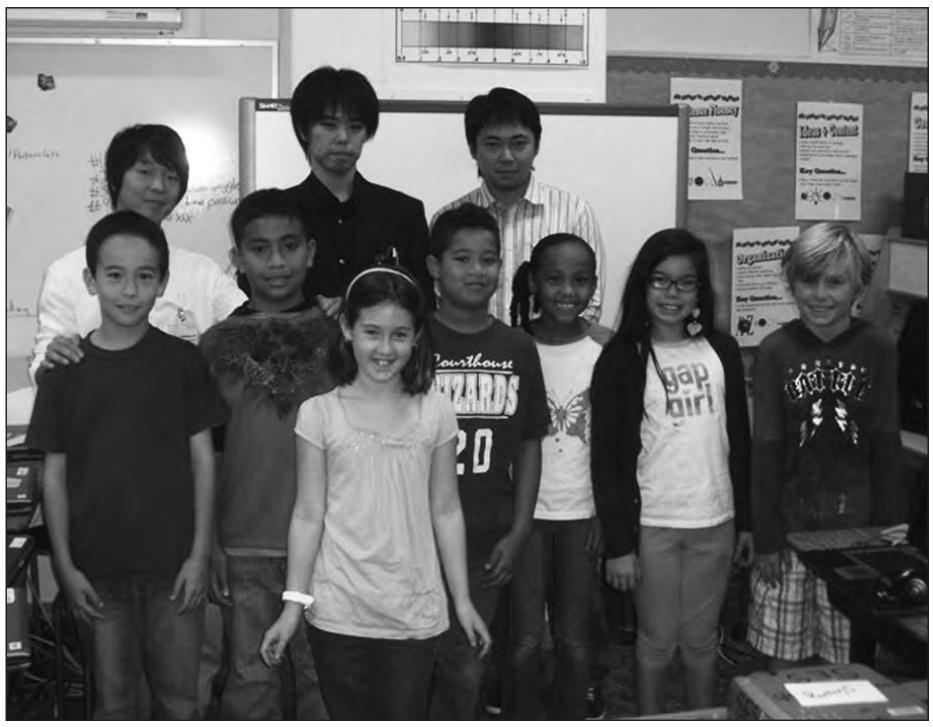
"The apprentices are very motivated, hard working and a really good group of guys to work with," said Swanland. "It is a good program."

Swanland wants to present his program to other teachers at the school and hopes they will also be able to come back to the school in the future.

One of the apprentices, Kyohei Mizuno found the experience of talking to the 4th-grade students, "fast, fun, and exciting. The children were very quiet."

Students from Parker's 4th-grade class found the presentations interesting and fun. When asked by their teacher what they learned, several shouted, "kakoii," which, when translated means "Cool." This Japanese word was only one of the words taught by apprentice Kenta IIjima during his presentation on the Japanese Language.

Parker was pleased that his students were able to transfer their learning so readily, but somewhat chagrined that they forgot to raise their hands. Oh well, excitement is a great path to learning.



(Back row from left) SRF-JRMC apprentices Kyouhei Mizuno,Yuudai Yokono and Kenta IIjima pose with 4th-grade students from The Sullivans Elementary School during a visit to the school Oct. 20. The apprentices got a chance to use their English language skills during their visit by talking and providing presentations about Japanese sports, language and the tea ceremony to the students.

NAVSUP Naval Supply Systems Command

U.S. FLEET & INDUSTRIAL SUPPLY CENTER YOKOSUKA HOLIDAY MAILING DATES

Holiday Mailing Dates 2010

(For Planned Delivery by Christmas Day)

Military Mail Address to: ⇨ Mail Class: ⇩	APO/FPO AE ZIPS 090-092	APO/FPO AE ZIPS 093	APO/FPO ZIPS 094-098	APO/FPO ZIPS 340	APO/FPO ZIPS 962-966	United States
Express Mail Military Service	18 Dec 10	Not Available	18 Dec 10	18 Dec 10	18 Dec 10	18 Dec 10
First Class Mail Letters/Cards	10 Dec 10	4 Dec 10	10 Dec 10	10 Dec 10	10 Dec 10	10 Dec 10
Priority Mail	10 Dec 10	4 Dec 10	10 Dec 10	10 Dec 10	10 Dec 10	10 Dec 10
Parcel Airlift	3 Dec 10	1 Dec 10	3 Dec 10	3 Dec 10	3 Dec 10	3 Dec 10
Space Available Mail	26 Nov 10	20 Nov 10	26 Nov 10	26 Nov 10	26 Nov 10	26 Nov 10
Parcel Post	12 Nov 10	12 Nov 10	12 Nov 10	12 Nov 10	12 Nov 10	12 Nov 10