

Higa Elementary learns a little English

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Since the beginning of the academic school year in April, the children of Higa Elementary School have been getting a little extra help with their English classes. But it's not cheating; the Sailors of Fleet Activities, Okinawa and tenant commands have been voluntarily teaching English to the students each month.

Opportunities like these are uncommon, especially in Okinawa.

Located in Uruma City on Hamahiga Island, Higa Elementary School is the only school in Okinawa that hosts this community relations event. The last lesson for the school year was taught on March 3 in the



school's gymnasium.

Eight Sailors, representing Security, the Naval Oceanography Anti-submarine Warfare Detachment and Public Affairs, used their

native language to help children with their English pronunciation, understanding and reading skills.

“The students were very anxious for the English class because the





and how disciplined the kids are; it's really different from when I remember going to school," said Toner.

The Sailors used flashcards with pictures to teach the children simple actions and commands in English such as "jump," "eat dinner," "speak English" and "go to school." But some of the children were having such a great time that they might not have realized they were learning basic English skills.

volunteers taught them English in a fun and enjoyable way," said Ishiki Hiromi, the principal of Higa Elementary School, during the introductions of the lessons. "The other schools do not have this type of exchange and look forward to studying with you again next [school] year."

Some volunteers have been attending these exchanges on a regular basis, but for Master at Arms 2nd Class William Toner, a patrolman for the security department at White Beach Naval Facility, it was a new experience.

"I gained a different aspect and different appreciation for this country, how they do their business at their schools

"I just think the children's laughter and seeing them really getting into it is refreshing," said Toner. "It's something that I really want to



continue to pursue."

At the end of the lesson, the children drew portraits of the volunteers on decorative paper plate necklaces as a keepsake to take home and presented them with a poster that expressed their appreciation.

"We appreciate your help very much. We enjoyed taking a walk together, learning how to say certain things in English and playing soccer. It was also fun to teach you Japanese. We had a good time at Halloween and the Christmas party. Thank you for everything," said Arisu, a student of Higa Elementary.

The Higa Elementary School will begin the next academic year in April 2011. Contact the CFAO Community Relations Department for more information on these community relations events.