Shipmates,

It’s May and we’re back for another edition of CMDCM Corner. Let’s kick things off with what’s foremost on the minds of our Petty Officers and future Petty Officers – the spring cycle advancement results. Like most years, you can anticipate the results will be released around the Memorial Day weekend. We’re still a few weeks out from that time, but once we get closer and get word on the release schedule, we’ll share that information across the spectrum. Good luck to everyone awaiting the results!

Looking back at the month of April, it’s incredible to see how much the team here at NAFA has accomplished. From Public Works’ Earth Week initiatives, to Exercise Reliant Gale; FFSC and MWR’s KidzFest; the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month Challenge and our premiere event of the year, Spring Fest, everyone on board deserves a hearty BZ for their efforts! We also can’t forget the folks at VRO who processed road tax payments for all of our SOFA status drivers.

We’re right around the corner from peak PCS season, so those of you who are preparing to depart Atsugi, I strongly encourage you to begin the process early. Overseas PCS moves come with a lot of moving parts and the sooner you start to tackle those issues, the smoother your move will be. Most importantly, make sure you book your Navy Lodge or NGI&S rooms with as much lead time as possible. Accommodations fill up fast, especially with the recent increase in TLA, so don’t hesitate.

Lastly, if you haven’t prepped your Service Dress Whites for this month’s seasonal uniform shift, you’re a bit behind the curve. The changeover here on the Kanto Plain takes place May 15th. That’s all for this month. Thank you for all you do, and remember, if you have any questions, ASK THE CHIEF!

May 6, 1860
The sloop-of-war Portsmouth, commanded by John Calhoun, captures the slaver brig Falmouth off Porto Praya.

May 21, 1943
USS Nields (DD 616) sinks Italian submarine Gorgo that is attacking a US convoy off Algeria.

May 26, 1990
USS Beaufort (ATS 2) rescues 24 Vietnamese refugees in the South China Sea.
Story by MC3 Jacob Smith, Photos by Public Affairs Office

At promptly 10 a.m., thousands of guests paraded their way through the Main Gate of Naval Air Facility (NAFA) Atsugi for a day filled with fun and friendship.

This marks the 64th annual iteration of the Spring Friendship Festival (Spring Fest) open base event as an effort to foster relations and build up mutual respect between U.S. service members and the host nation of Japan and its citizens.

The history behind the Spring Festival can be traced back to 1955 for the first NAFA open base event. The Spring Festival is hosted every year in April. It was formerly known as the Cherry Blossom Festival and was held from 2006 to 2012. This was changed due to the cherry blossom trees blossoming at an earlier time. The festival has changed in other ways as well, namely going from hosting air shows to hosting a large number of static aircraft displays.

Alliance Park offered a traditional tea ceremony for people to observe and enjoy some authentic Japanese tea with demonstrators in traditional Japanese dress. Children had a series of bounce houses they could hop around in to their heart’s content. There were also multiple demonstrations where members from Commander Naval
Forces, Japan Fire and Emergency Services showcased their firefighting capabilities on controlled fires. They also allowed children to try on child sized firefighting gear and use a firehose under their supervision. On Taylor Field music provided from both a live band and a dj between sets, the NAF Atsugi Taiko Kids, Shirley Lanham Elementary School Kids, Rafines Dance Team and the Dahu band.

Aside from the entertainment, there was dozens of booths hosted by different coalitions and groups here on NAF Atsugi that were selling food, beverages and souvenirs. One of the most unique booths however, belonged to the "Golden Falcons" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 12, who had their Lt. Natalie Livingston, from Seattle, WA, posing with an anime-styled depiction of herself via cardboard cutout for photographs.

"I’m quite proud to have this character that’s getting more popular as time goes on," said Livingston whilst having her picture taken by guests. "I feel this is a drawing point for some guests; it shows them that we’ve embraced their culture and we’re happy to be here and interact with them."

Last but not least, there were more than a dozen static displays of various aircraft, including F-18s, E-2s, and SH-60s, belonging to both U.S. and Japanese forces for guests to climb aboard in some cases, take photos along Halsey road and on the flight line.

One guest that came out was Sunan Suzuki, from Ayase-city, who has been living in Japan for 18 years after moving from Thailand. She came here with her family and says that their favorite aspect of Spring Fest is seeing all the static displays.

Sailors from the base were also engaging in the festivities alongside the guests, such as Aviation Electronics Technician Airman Emily Savannahcook, from Miracle, Texas. She has been on base for seven months and got to experience her very first "Spring Fest."

"I feel events like these really bring together both communities, the locals and the service members, and helps eliminate any stigma between us," said Savannahcook. "Getting together helps in many ways, as a morale boost, helps us really see who we’re here to defend and allows them to meet us as well."

While there is only one day of Spring Festival events inside NAF Atsugi’s gates a year, the memories and experiences of both the Japanese citizens and U.S. forces will continue on the other 364 days through the bonds created by both parties.
JAPAN

HOCJJI TEMPLE

PHOTO BY M.C. JACOB SMITH

UCHIGAWA SAKURA

PHOTO BY M.C. BEN TARONE

SANKENEN GARDEN

PHOTO BY M.C. MICHAEL DOAN

THROUGH THE LENS
FOOD, FUN, FITNESS
MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MC3 JACOB SMITH

While being a U.S. Navy Sailor is a 24/7 responsibility, at some point everyone needs time to recover and recuperate in order to stay rested and maintain a mission-ready mentality. NAF Atsugi's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) department's wide ranging services meet their needs.

MWR's mission is to deliver high-quality, customer-focused programs and services that contribute to resiliency, retention, readiness and quality of life. On base, they run numerous facilities, and provide services to multiple avenues for Sailors to enjoy their liberty through means of recreation, fitness and dining.

“MWR is all about fun, food and fitness,” said MWR’s Recreation Director, John Benningfield. “We know it is difficult for Sailors to be over here without their extended families and loved ones, so we are trying to be their family as much as possible, to help relieve some of that homesickness.”

One of NAFA's underutilized services provided for single Sailors is the Liberty Center, the most exclusive club on base according to Benningfield. Only for the single and unaccompanied, the lounge provides multiple couches and televisions for Sailors to enjoy their favorite programs or to hook their gaming consoles up. It also contains a small theater in which patrons can choose from a selection of movies to watch for free, along with computers and Wi-Fi for everyone's web surfing needs. As a way to help bring in even more people, MWR hosts a free pizza night every Friday evening, provided by the neighboring Parcheezi’s Italian restaurant.

For outside recreation, MWR provides gear rentals for bikes, skis, snowboards, tents, grills, bounce houses and more. They also manage the golf course which is open year round, along with the fields which may be used for sports.

The two gyms on base, Halsey and Ranger, routinely hold fitness and martial arts class, competitions and sports events and can even support families by providing a place for children to play safely while the parents exercise. They have fitness coordinators who can assist with setting up individuals with a trainer, training on nutrition and workout routines.

“I think MWR really is doing the best they can with all they provide,” said Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Jonathan Bate, of the “Golden Falcons” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 12. “They got really flexible hours with the gym which is the biggest thing for me, and I enjoy going to the movies here on base, so I’m really thankful for all that MWR does for us.”

Other places for recreation are the Auto Skills Center, where visitors may work on their vehicles and learn automobile repair and maintenance skills, and the library, where guests can check out both books and video games. There is also Culture Craft Classes which provide Japanese culture and language programs that are hosted multiple times a month.

In addition to all the facilities and programs available, MWR also hosts events on and off-base, and offers trips in order to allow Sailors to go out and experience the culture of Japan, all at the lowest prices they can offer, providing discounts for E5 and below on top of that.

“The most challenging aspect for MWR is trying to meet the needs and desires of every patron while working through some of the controls and limitations that...
Environmental awareness is an ideal that has grown exponentially in the last few years as individuals all over the world have realized the impact they have on the planet. One of the most common initiatives undertaken to better the environment is recycling. In Japan recycling is deeply entrenched in the culture as it has been part of Japanese law since the 1990s.

Here on Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi the Public Works Department Environmental Division is trying to do its part and educate all residents on the base on the importance of recycling.

To do so, the department held a weeklong series of events as a part of Earth Week.

The first event of Earth Week occurred on Monday, April 22, with an Earth Day poster contest at Shirley Lanham Elementary School. "The contest was designed to teach kids the importance of recycling," said Christopher L. Carson, the Environmental Engineer. "The theme of this year’s contest was reduce, re-use, and recycle." The winners’ posters were then put on display in the food court at the NEX on base.

One of the most common initiatives undertaken to better the environment is recycling. In Japan recycling is deeply entrenched in the culture as it has been part of Japanese law since the 1990s.

To do so, the department held a weeklong series of events as a part of Earth Week.

The following Wednesday, there was a household hazardous waste drop off at housing self-help center, which raises awareness of services located on base that people may not be aware of. For example, the self-help center is a place where people may bring any common household hazardous materials that may have some dangerous aspect to them and should not be thrown away.

"I can relate to the Sailors who may be away from home for the first time, in a foreign land at that," said Quinton Gray, food service attendant at Smokey’s BBQ. “Some simple American food can be a great reassurance, and knowing that a comfort such is this is close by can also be a motivator for Sailors to get out and try something new since they know they always have somewhere they can come and feel at home. For that reason, I feel Trilogy is a nice place for all Sailors to come by, grab some food and relax while watching a game or two.”

To learn more about upcoming events, trips and other MWR services, speak to the MWR team in the Liberty Center in Bldg. 77, or contact John Benningfield at extension 4651 or email John.Benningfield@fe.navy.mil.

"That being said, it’s very rewarding to provide these resources for all our Sailors, putting on events and trips all at the lowest cost we can just to make our customers happy. Our goal always is to enrich the lives of our Sailors, making their enlistment here enjoyable and increase naval retention."
along with other trash to be disposed of. You can call them 264-2593.

The weeks’ events were capped off that Friday by having booths set up for various environmental programs which included a recycling game and information. A base wide clean-up contest happened which asked people to clean up trash all around the base ahead of the typhoon season and then to be brought to the department to be weighed and the top three received prizes.

“One of the things I want to get out there is that what we do to the environment with our trash hurts us in the long run,” said Valerie Vernier, the Natural, Cultural Resources and Pesticides Compliance Manager. “Anything that goes into any storm drain makes it into nature and then we are going behind it and eating the fish that come out of that same water.”

To make sure that this cycle is broken and people truly start understanding how big of an impact they have on the environment the environmental division felt that it was important to start the education at an early age.

“Recycling for me is more about protecting our environment for our own future, that’s why we are going to the school,” said Vernier. “Our main goal is to teach the young who will then go home and teach their families, retrain the old and reduce the amount of trash out there.”

With the effort put on this week, the environmental division spent a week promoting awareness, so people will pay more attention to their actions and the environment and remind everyone that they are always available to answer any question or assist with recycling if needed.

Most of us hold jobs that we hope will both advance our life experiences and – in other traditional roles – professional and military careers. But I believe there is even more to each of us than the jobs we hold or the careers we advance. Certainly stay-at-home parents can embrace that understanding. But, even those with more traditional paying jobs often seek a greater meaning than the labor that provides for their families and society. I’m talking about volunteerism. I recently had the honor of recognizing volunteers during the FFSC Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. These volunteers each represent selfless devotion that rises above paycheck or promotion. Volunteering also provides an invaluable inner self-worth. I invite you to answer your inner sense of humanity and seek a volunteer opportunity that lifts your heart and serves a greater purpose for your community. To help you, we’ll be publishing opportunities to help you choose a cause close to you on our web site.

Speaking of our Sailors and employees, we have BZs coming in from all across base. I’d like to mention the highlights of excellent customer service from this past month. The personnel at the Golf Pro shop, the healthcare providers at the Branch Health Clinic, the employees of both Skywriter’s and Smokey’s, the staff at Club Trilogy, the front desk team at Ranger Gym, the automobile experts at Auto Port and the instructors at the golf course. Thank you for all your time and effort to support NAF Atsugi’s community!

Looking ahead, there will be many things to keep an eye on for the upcoming month. Uniform shift to dress whites comes to pass on May 15th, BCAs and PRTs throughout the month and with the weather being warm enough for it, the outdoor pool will be opening back up May 25th. Check out the NAFA facebook page for details on these events and more!

CAPT Lloyd Mack