

U.S. Navy personnel receive Zenkokai Award

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ZENKOKAI

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan – Nine individuals and four organizations from U.S. Navy installations based in Japan found themselves the recipients of a very prestigious award given by the Government of Japan (GOJ) for exhibiting good conduct on Nov. 26, 2011.

The Zenkokai Award or the Good Conduct Award is given by an independent non-profit organization by the name of the Zenkokai Association (or the Good Conduct Association of Japan) under the control of the Cabinet Office of the GOJ.

The award is given annually to those who have given a significant contribution to their communities.

“It’s definitely an honor to receive something so prestigious,” said Yeoman 1st Class Fletcher McNeil of Naval Air Facility (NAF)

Atsugi. “I just like to volunteer in the community, on the weekends, or even during the week. It’s for the community.”

The award ceremony was held at the world famous Meiji-Jingu Shrine in Tokyo.

The shrine was built between the years of 1915 and 1921 in honor of Emperor Meiji, a man who gave Japan the biggest contribution by leading them into the modern age during his reign.

The individuals honored were: Mr. Jeffrey Wilson of NAF Misawa; Aviation Support Equipment Technician 1st Class Dennis Koon of Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD), NAF Misawa; Information Systems Technician 1st Class Malkia Ross of Navy Information Operations Command, Yokosuka; Yeoman 1st Class Fletcher McNeil of NAF Atsugi; Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Rodell Hardaway of NAF Atsugi Supply Department; Ms. Sakae Anne Suralie of the NAF Atsugi Fleet and Family Support Center; Operations Specialist 2nd Class Adam Richards of Commander Fleet Activities Sasebo Port Operations; Mr. Charles D. Bush of Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa (CFAO); and Yeoman 2nd Class Rie Okada of CFAO.

The organizations honored were: Navy Misawa First Class Petty Officer Mess; U.S. Navy Information Operation Command Misawa; NAF Atsugi Japan MWR Child and Youth Programs; and NAF Atsugi Safety and Security Departments.

Some of the volunteer opportunities and programs the awardees participated in included coaching, working in orphanages, helping the elderly, and teaching English.

“Personally, I think it’s all about helping someone else,” said Information Systems Technician 1st Class Malkia Ross. “Even though you may not always be recognized, it’s never about that. It’s always about helping someone else.”

NAF Atsugi had three individuals and two organizations recognized for their good conduct and community services, the most honorees from any one installation.

“These individuals and organizations exemplify the spirit of NAF Atsugi,” said Capt. Eric Gardner, commanding officer of NAF Atsugi. “As we demonstrated during Operation Tomodachi, it is our goal to always assist and contribute to the improvement of life and the environment of our surrounding communities. We continually strive to be great neighbors and allied partners to our gracious Japanese hosts.”

Capt. Richard Weathers, Commander of Fleet Activities Okinawa represented the Navy in giving congratulatory remarks during the ceremony.

“These men and women did not engage in the activities that won them this great honor for the purpose of public recognition,” said Weathers. “They did so because they sincerely want to be a part of

their community and friends to their Japanese neighbors and because of the great love they bear for the Nation of Japan.”

Though all awardees were honored to be the recipients of the Zenkokai Award, it was the agreed that this would change nothing. They volunteer because it is what they want to do and the right thing to do.

“I hope that the Japanese community does see that we are here to help them and to offer them social support,” said Ross. “We are not here, just to be here. We’re here and we are apart of the community.”