

NAF Atsugi Celebrates National Mentoring Month

Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Kegan E. Kay

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Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi honored mentors at the Shirley Lanham Elementary School (SLES) as part National Mentoring Month on Jan. 26.

Mr. Nobuo Okada, Vice Principal of the Terao Elementary School (TES), spoke as the guest speaker for the event and thanked NAF Atsugi's community for the mentors who had dedicated their time in helping the students learn English.

Two students from the TES assisted Okada in presenting certificates as well as farewell cards to Gas Turbine System Technician Electrical 1st Class Jason Calata and Damage Controlman 1st Class Jeffrey Ballard, who have assisted in the program while stationed at NAF Atsugi and are transferring.

Students of SLES recited poems and stories about their mentors, followed by NAF Atsugi's Commanding Officer, Capt. Steven Wieman, presenting certificates to the mentors.

Wieman also talked briefly about his own mentor who helped him in his career when he first started out as an ensign in the U.S. Navy.

Under a proclamation by President Barack Obama, January has been designated National Mentoring Month.

"Every day, mentors help young Americans face the challenges of growing into adulthood," Obama said. "By setting a positive example and sharing their time

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knowledge and experience, mentors play an essential role in preparing our Nation's youth for a bright future."

National Mentoring Month is the chance to celebrate the contributions of all those who cultivate a supportive environment for the next generation, and we recommit to expanding mentorship opportunities across the country, said Obama.

"There are just so many people around the base that come and volunteer for all kind of events through out the year, " said Aviation Boatswain's Mate Equipment 2nd Class Michael Selvey. "To see the turn out that you get with volunteers is crazy. It makes you feel good to see everybody taking part also."

"[The volunteers] go out of their way," said Diwata Solomon, NAF Atsugi's Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC)'s Work and Family Life Consultant. "To know the kids more and how they can help them develop not only in their homework but in all aspects of their life."

"Being a mentor to me is trying to understand whoever you are mentoring and for me it's the students and trying to use what I know to help them," said Aviation Electronics Technician 2nd Class Eric Lampkin.

Lampkin said he tries to ask general questions but if they don't understand he will ask in Japanese and use their response to give the English counterpart to bring a variety to their conversations.

"You are giving to the kids," said Selvey. "Even if you have a bad day, when you go to a Homework Helpers event or a sporting event with the kids and you can see how they

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enjoy it, it makes your day that much better.”

Mentees or those who just want to thank a mentor for their work can go to www.nationalmentoringmonth.org.

On the website there is a section dedicated to thanking mentors by leaving stories explaining how a mentor has influenced a person’s life.