Ombudsman honored during appreciation dinner

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) leaders, service members and family members said thank you to Yokosuka ombudsman for their service at an appreciation dinner held Sept. 1.

Through out the year the ombudsman worked with the families get the them help, care or training they need to improve their quality of life while stationed at CFAY.

"When you are over seas, the resources you have available are different, there is a language barrier and the culture itself is different," said Brenda Ray, Yokosuka ombudsman coordinator. "If you have a problem you can always call them and they can refer you to the people who can help you and if you ever need to contact the command, for information or in an emergency, they can help you do that because they are the liaison between the command the families."

Earlier in the year the ombudsman played a role in helping the families deal with the crisis after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that struck northern Japan.

"We had never dealt with something like that. [The ombudsman] were keeping up with all the information as it was changing and getting it out to as many people as they could, if someone needed help they would get them help. [The ombudsman] would tell them where they could get this information or to go here to get more information and kept in touch with the families even when they were in the states."

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen and Kim Tullos, CFAY ombudsman assembly chairperson cut a cake at the 2011 CFAY ombudsman appreciation dinner Sept. 1. The dinner honored all the hard work and time the ombudsman had spent helping the families and commands during the year.

Ombudsman from CFAY, tenant commands and ships forward deployed to Yokosuka were all invited to the dinner. The dinner coincided with ship's schedules so, many of the commands were there in person to show their gratitude. The date also marks an important period on the ombudsman calender.

"Admiral Zumwalt initiated the ombudsman program 41 years ago and it started September 14," said Kim Tullos, CFAY ombudsman assembly chairperson. "So starting in early September, ombudsman around the world are appreciated by their commands throughout the month."

After the dinner was served, CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen gave a speech and took photos with each of the ombudsman while handing them their certificates of appreciation. The ombudsman also received a bag full of gifts from the community.

"Your efforts are so deeply appreciated and this is just a little bit of what we could do for you and it's not enough by any means, we wouldn't get through what we do every year if it weren't for the ombudsman," said Owen.

MCPON sends Ombudsman Appreciation Day message

Special from MCPON (SS/SW) Rick D. West

WASHINGTON – Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)(SS/SW) Rick D. West and his wife, Bobbi, ombudsman-at-large, released the following Ombudsman Appreciation Day message to the Fleet Sept. 12.

"Navy Ombudsmen,

Bobbi and I would like to take the time to say 'thank you' for all your hard work and dedication to our Sailors, families and our great Navy for the past 41 years. Since Admiral Zumwalt established the ombudsman program, the outstanding volunteers who have stepped up and have served in this important role have left a lasting positive impact that resonates across the Fleet every day.

We honor you, our Navy ombudsmen, who are Navy spouses and highly trained volunteers that provide a vital communication link between commands and families. When our families are faced with the challenges of deployments or family emergencies, our dedicated ombudsmen promote resiliency and self-reliance by providing guidance that assists families to regain a sense of normalcy.

Our ombudsmen serve with a genuine desire to help and represent the very best of the program's tremendous legacy. Mission readiness is tied to family readiness, and family readiness is tied in part to the selfless dedication of our extraordinary ombudsmen.

Please join Bobbi and me in offering our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our Navy ombudsmen and their 41 years of excellence.

Bravo Zulu and "Hooyah,"

Very Respectfully,

MCPON and Bobbi West"