'Tomodachi Kids' tour *USS George Washington*

Story and photo by MC3 Marcos Vazquez,
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Nearly two dozen children from the city of Rikuzentakata, a community devastated by the 2011 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami, visited the Japan-based aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), March 31.

The children toured the ship, visiting the Navigation Bridge, Flight Deck Control and Flight Deck before making one last stop in the ship's store to pick up a souvenir.

Ranging in age from 12-14, the children came from three different schools in Rikuzentakata and were all deeply affected by the tragedy. While some children lost their homes and belongings, others lost family members in the disaster. A year later and still dealing with the pain, the visit to *George Washington* proved to be a huge morale boost.

"The ship is very big," said Ayaka Tachibana, one of the visiting students. "I got to sit in the Captain's chair which was high up and I got to see all the ships around us. It was fun."

A down pouring of rain couldn't dampen the children's excitement to see the flight deck with their own eyes. Cameras flashed as many stood smiling in front of aircraft and the hull number 73 on the island.

"I'm very happy," said Hiyori Shida, another student on the tour. "The whole ship is interesting but my favorite part was the flight deck."

Providing a temporary roof over their heads, 19 military families volunteered to house the students for the weekend, allowing them to see more of the base than just *George Washington*.

"These kids have lost so much and Operation Tomodachi, as a whole, really helped them," said Chief Master-at-Arms James Guthrie, one of the tour's primary coordinators. "This was a good chance to let them experience a taste of what we do out here and I hope they bring back another group again."

A nine hour bus ride from home, this was a unique opportunity for the students: it was the first time they had visited a U.S. military base. This tour has been in the planning stages since November 2011, when the U.S. Embassy contacted the mayor of Rikuzentakata and coordinated a weekend trip to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY).

After departing the ship, the students headed for the Fleet Recreation Gym where they played games of dodge ball and basketball with some of Yokosuka's junior high students.

George Washington is currently pier side in Yokosuka, Japan and making preparations to return to sea.

Students from Rikuzentakata, a Japanese city that was devastated by Japan's 2011 earthquake and tsunami, pose for a photo in front of the island onboard the Nimitz class aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) March 31. *George Washington* was one of twenty-four U.S. Navy ships that provided relief efforts in the aftermath of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.

'21st Century Sailor and Marine' highlighted at Warrior Resilience Conference

By Lt. Matt Allen,
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

WASHINGTON – Senior Navy leaders and experts from across the Department of Defense met March 29 at the Defense Centers of Excellence conference for Warrior Resilience.

This year's two-day meeting is focusing on the theme, "Restoring Readiness: Individual, Unit, Community and Family" and will allow participants from every service to share experiences that augment and build readiness skills.

Chaplain of the Marine Corps, Rear Adm. Margaret Kibben and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, Rick West represented the Department of the Navy during the opening sessions and described how the 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative aligned with the conference's mission to restore readiness and enhance resilience within the individual, unit, family and community.

Speaking about the wide range of independent readiness and resiliency programs traditionally offered to service members and their families, Rear Adm. Kibben explained the origin of the 21st Century Sailor and Marine program.

"We have been working with all these services to help identify who does what, why they do it and how can we work together," said Kibben. "21st Century Sailor and Marine is exactly what we've been doing for a long time but we are now highlighting and understanding that as we look at individual Sailors and Marines, it behooves us to ensure they have the full range of resources available to them."

Announced last month, this initiative consolidates a set of objectives and policies, new and existing, to maximize Sailor and Marine personal readiness.

The programs are divided into the five areas of readiness, safety, physical fitness, inclusion, and continuum of service.

Various programs fall under the readiness area, all of which help ensure the Department of the Navy has the most mentally prepared service members and families in department history.

Continued emphasis on the responsible use of alcohol, zero tolerance for drug use, suicide reduction, family and personal preparedness, and financial and family stability all work together to prepare Sailors, Marines and their families for the challenges they may face and reinforce healthy alternatives on liberty or off-duty.

After describing the commonality of military culture across all the services, West told the audience that the core elements of the 21st Century initiative did not just arise to leadership's attention.

"This program is something we've thought about for a long time and it takes our policies, procedures and people, and focuses them toward building and maintaining resiliency," West said. "We are ensuring our service members are able to meet these challenges."

After over a decade of continuous military operations and the growth of many programs designed to help service members and their families, leadership and conference attendees are looking to share ideas, build skills and improve focus.

"Typically, we take these programs and focus on them for a period of time, but if we don't focus on them, they can fall by the wayside," said West. "We can't afford to do that, particularly when it comes to resiliency."

To learn more about the Warrior Resilience conference, visit http://www.dcoe.health.mil/Training/WarriorResilienceConferenceIV.aspx.

For more information about 21st Century Sailor and Marine, visit http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=65698.

CFAY VITA Center Tip of the Week

You are running out of time.

Get to the tax center and file your income taxes.

Visit the Naval Legal Service Office or the CFAY Tax Center.