Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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Memorial Day honors ultimate sacrifices of those who served

By Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) honored those who sacrificed their lives in our nation's service with a Memorial Day ceremony here in the Benny Decker Theater May 30.

"All you have to do is visit Arlington [National] Cemetery and take note of all the white crosses and flags that decorate that hallowed ground," said CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen, during his remarks. "The former estate of Robert E. Lee continues to accept our departed warriors even today. The sons and daughters of our beloved country which paid the ultimate price are the ever enduring symbol of what it takes to remain free."

According to the Library of Congress.gov website, Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day and was first celebrated May 30, 1868.

The intent of the holiday was outlined in, then, Grand Army of the Republic, Commander in Chief John A. Logan's general order number 11, which reads in part, "for the purpose of strewing flowers, or otherwise decorating graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land."

According to the site, in 1971, federal law changed the observance of the holiday from May 30 to the last Monday in May and extended the honor to all soldiers who died in American wars. However, a few states continue to celebrate Memorial Day on May 30.

President Barrack Obama addressed the subject when he delivered his "Prayer for Peace" proclamation May 27. "For over two centuries, brave men and women have laid down their lives in defense of our great nation. These heroes have made the ultimate sacrifice so we may uphold the ideals we all cherish. On this Memorial Day, we honor the generations of Americans who have fought and died to defend our freedom.

A color guard parades the colors as a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization look on, during a Memorial Day ceremony held here at the Benny Decker Theater May 30. The ceremony honored service members who gave their lives in wars past.

U.S. Navy photo By MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith

"On this solemn day in which Americans unite in remembrance of our country's fallen, we also pray for our military personnel and their families, our veterans, and all who have lost loved ones. As a grateful nation, we forever carry the selfless sacrifice of our fallen heroes in our hearts, and we share the task of caring for those they left behind."

With Memorial Day being a national holiday, a lot of people get a long weekend in which they barbeque and have a good time. However, the day is much more than just time off from work.

"This is a time to place flowers and wreaths upon the graves of our fallen Sailors, Marines, soldiers and airmen," said Owen. "To pay respect and reflect upon what it takes to be free and the ultimate sacrifices that must be made in order to ensure we stay that way. This weekend and holiday is not about the start of summer, the barbeque season or vacation time.

"To all of you, while you spend precious time with your family and friends, I ask you to remember the true meaning of the weekend."

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Senior trip becomes donation money to help host nation neighbors

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Seniors from the class of 2011 at Nile C. Kinnick High School (KHS) and the American Red Cross (ARC) of Yokosuka worked together to donate money to the victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that struck northern Japan.

Almost every year the seniors of KHS take a trip to different places such as Tokyo Disneyland for example. The school staff and students collect money, which pays for the trip and then buys the tickets or passes that are needed.

This year the trip was cancelled due to the disaster near Sendai, Japan. So, this year the students came up with a different plan.

"We were planning to refund all the money back to the students, but we thought it would be a good idea to collect all this money and any extra we had and send it to the people up north," said KHS senior Josh Adair.

"A lot of students said that they wanted to get involved somehow, so if we could, instead of going on a trip to Safari Park, we could go somewhere and help clean up or something," said KHS senior Amanda Sibayan. "But we knew that would be difficult to coordinate, so a lot of students suggested that we should donate the money."

The students are part of military families. Some of these families have Sailors who were involved with "Operation Tomodachi," which was the U.S. Navy humanitarian aid mission to help the victims of the disaster.

"We told all the parents this is what we plan to do with the money and that we thought it was a good way to get involved," said Sabayan.

Mike Adair, a KHS teacher and senior class advisor, contacted ARC Yokosuka to help get the money from the students to the people who need it - who lost homes, family members, jobs, and a way of life.

"The students conceived the idea. It was all student generated. I just helped with the logistics," said Adair.

"The American Red Cross is accepting it. Our national headquarters is in contact with the Japanese Red Cross. They will send the money directly to the Japanese Red Cross," said ARC Yokosuka Senior Station Manager Cecil Goodman. "It's always great when we can help somebody."

(Left) American Red Cross (ARC) Yokosuka Senior Station Manager Cecil Goodman and Nile C. Kinnick High School (KHS) students and staff pose with a mock up of the check that they donated to the ARC May 26. KHS seniors donated the money originally intended for a senior class trip to the ARC to help the victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that struck northern Japan.

Although the seniors had only a few days left in their school year when they chose to donate the money, they remained focused.

"This late in the year, seniors are usually like 'Boy, how long until we're out of here?' but it was really encouraging that they stop and pause and think 'wow, there is still some stuff that we could get done," said Adair. "They took the time and said 'let's still make a difference."

INSIDE

Students, local organizations improve ocean ecosystem

CFAY PWD Environmental Division and students from The Sullivans School joined together to plant eel grass and release young fish into the base marina May 16.

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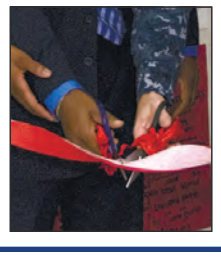

Ribbon cutting ceremony opens teen resource center

Nile C. Kinnick High School, on board CFAY, officially opened its Life After Kinnick Teen Resource Center with a ribbon cutting ceremony June 2.

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