Ribbon cutting ceremony opens teen resource center

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Nile C. Kinnick High School, onboard Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), officially opened its Life After Kinnick Teen Resource Center with a ribbon cutting ceremony June 2.

"This center will support our mobile military students with portfolios, and assist them with career, scholarship and college searches, and be a place where they can plan for a life after Kinnick," said CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen, during his opening remarks. "CFAY is proud to partner with Kinnick in this effort."

The center, which has been an ongoing project for the school, is aimed at helping students prepare for their futures.

"The Life After Kinnick Resource Center has been a goal for Kinnick High School for the last fives years," said Kinnick High School math teacher Chey Hickey. "The purpose is to provide students with a place to go when they are investigating what they are going to do beyond high school."

According to Hickey, students will go through the center in cycles, in a natural progression from ninth-grade students focusing on getting to know themselves more and what their potential desires are to 12-grade students focusing more on college searches.

"It is designed for students to start their searches in the ninth grade," said Hickey. "So, by the time that they leave here they have a good idea of what they want to do when they graduate and how they can obtain additional training, go to college, join the military, whatever it is they need to do."

(Center) Nile C. Kinnick High School Principal Lorenzo Brown and CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen participate in the ceremonial ribbon cutting during the official opening of the Life After Kinnick Teen Resource Center June 2. The center is aimed at helping students prepare for their futures.

Hickey stated that many students have the idea that they can wait until junior or senior year to start [planning for their futures]. However, some students may find that, while in high school, they need extra courses that relate to their career of choice. By starting early, in ninth grade, students can determine what they would like to do, then through successive grades determine what skills they need to develop and what courses they need to take.

Even when students transfer, they can take their folder with them to their next school to continue working toward their goals.

According to Hickey, though efforts are being made to help students prepare for their futures throughout the Department of Defense Education Activity, the resource center at Kinnick is one of very few that exists.

However, the Kinnick center wouldn't exist without all the efforts that went in to making it a reality.

"This has been a communitywide effort. We got a tremendous amount of support from parents; we got lots of support from CFAY; we got a lot of our college resources from people who brought things from home, or volunteered to write their colleges and get materials to stock the center," said Hickey. "So, we are very thankful for that.

Students celebrate Reunification Day with music, laughter, sports

By Vicki Boehler, Nile C. Kinnick High School Public Affairs

The song "*Reunited*" by Peaches and Herb, as well as other music and laughter filtered through the gym of Nile C. Kinnick High School, as the school celebrated Reunification Day in honor of all students who departed Japan and also to pay tribute and salute all of those who remained.

The departure of many of the Yokosuka base community caused by the March 11 earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima Power Plant disaster, left the students in an upheaval. Movement of friends to all parts of the world and uncertainty at what the future would be like for graduation, sports or other extracurricular activities left many students confused, lonely and worried.

But something stronger evolved as was noted by senior David Bailey. "The students that stayed behind started to band together and they created a whole new Kinnick family," Bailey said. "The student council, along with many other teachers, felt that once everybody came back to Yokosuka, we needed to have a day where we can all come back together as one."

When word was received of the departure being lifted, a plan was being formed for a Reunification Day. Kinnick faculty and student council members wanted to honor all students who departed Japan. The goal was to bring the students and staff together to say welcome back, and to rekindle friendships. Not overlooked, was to say thank you to those who stayed behind here and endured the worries.

And what better way to do that than with a good natured dodge ball game, between the classes? "Unfortunately since so many people were backed up on schoolwork we couldn't do a half-day even like we initially planned," Bailey said. "But getting almost our entire student body to wear either red or white, and having a really successful dodge ball tournament helped us to solidify the sense of community and boost the school morale which was our original intention."

Teamwork was recreated between the classes. Sparks of friendly competition was once again generated between classes and staff alike. The student council made the event festive with music and snacks, and funds raised went toward the junior class. Seniors came away the winner, but the whole school came away the victorious. At the conclusion of events, a group picture was taken of all those who participated. The students who had departed Japan were asked to wear white and all staff members and students who remained were asked to wear red. "*Tomadachi*" may have been the name of the relief operation that occurred following the earthquake but Kinnick High School found true meaning of the word "friend" through all that was endured.

The editor asks:

Did you know, retired pay earned but not paid in the final month of your life goes to whoever is listed as your Arrears of Pay (AOP) beneficiary? The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) will also contact this person for help with closing your account.

You can choose anyone, from family members to friends to associates, to be your AOP beneficiary. But if you don't designate someone, it could cause undue stress and financial hardship for your survivors during an already difficult time. It can take many months to locate your survivors, identify who is legally entitled to your pay, and then make the payment.

Fortunately, this situation is easy to prevent. You can establish or change your beneficiary at any time. To designate or change your AOP beneficiary, all you have to do is follow these simple steps:

• Complete a Designation of Beneficiary Information form (DD 2894). You can find this form at www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/eforms/dd2894.pdf.

• Sign and date the form. Unsigned and undated forms will not be processed.

• Mail or fax the form to:

DFAS U.S. Military Retired Pay
P.O. Box 7130
London, KY 40742-7130
Fax: 800-469-6559

It is vital to notify DFAS of any changes in your AOP beneficiary's contact information. Otherwise all correspondence will be sent to the wrong address, further delaying closure of your account. Use the steps above to notify DFAS if your beneficiaries name or contact information changes.

For more information about AOP, visit the website http://www.dfas.mil/dfas/retiredmilitary/provide/aop.html.

Pet of the Week

These two ferrets are Chocolate and Vanilla. They are well socialized and quite sweet with people. They are two out of six that were abandoned, the others have all found a home. These two, a boy and a girl, are litter box trained and will be much happier if they stay together. Ferrets are social animals and can get just as lonely as a dog or cat. If you can see yourself enjoying the company of these two, just let us know. To find out more about these ferrets or any animal at Pets Are Worth Saving (P.A.W.S.), contact them at 243-9996, by e-mail to usskittytalk.yokosuka@gmail.com or visit the P.A.W.S. website at www.pawsyokosukajapan.com.

Photo courtesy of P.A.W.S.