Repairer of broken walls

By Chaplain Douglas Vrieland

This past week I had the privilege of accompanying Jonathan Auman, the Protestant Youth Director here at the Chapel of Hope, twelve high school students, and four other sponsors up north to Ishinomaki, Japan to assist with the ongoing recovery effort from the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami. This was my fourth trip to Ishinomaki, three to help with the recovery efforts and one last Christmas to show my children who were visiting what we had been doing in that community.

It has been an amazing experience to see the progress being made in that community as a result of all the recovery effort. In my previous trips there were numerous foundations where homes and other buildings once stood. Today many of those have been removed, and many have been replaced by greenhouses or community gardens. Previously all building efforts were aimed at rebuilding those homes that were left standing after the tsunami. Today you can see brand new construction going on. Many of the rebuilt homes are once again occupied by their owners, and the small yards around them are filled with plants and flowers. Even the giant mountains of garbage don't seem quite as high as they were last fall. Things have definitely improved.

There is still a great deal of work that has to be done, however. During our week there we cleared weeds out of several vacant lots and "mudded" out a number of apartment buildings. Driving through the area, one can still see numerous damaged buildings that remain untouched. And if you go outside the major metropolitan areas there are a number of smaller communities that remain completely untouched.

As I was reflecting on the experiences of last week I came across Isaiah 58 in the Bible. In that chapter the writer says that God is not just interested in our formal religious practices such as church attendance and Bible studies, but also in whether or not His followers are pursuing justice for and showing compassion to the poor and needy. The spiritual life is lived out, not just in the church, synagogue or mosque, but on the streets seven days a week. In verse 12 we read: "Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will rise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." I like that verse. I think it describes many of us, as we have responded to the disaster in this land where we live. Whether we were a part of the Seventh Fleet's Operation Tomodachi immediately following the crisis, or were family members who remained behind while the sailors responded to the call; whether we personally traveled to the affected areas and offered our assistance or gave money to the Red Cross and other relief organizations, many of us have been a part of this recovery process. We can be called "Repairer of Broken Walls."

Many Japanese citizens are concerned that the world has moved on and forgotten them. The events of March 2011 are no longer headlines in the newspaper. Recovery is a slow process, but the Broken Walls are being repaired. But Broken Walls are material losses. Material losses are in many ways the easiest to recover from. Many still live with the much deeper loss of grief over loved ones who were killed. In many cases the remains of their loved ones were washed out to sea. Such losses are much harder to recover from. I want to encourage people of faith to continue to pray for those who are learning to live with the many losses that came from this disaster. Through the support of our prayer we become not only Repairers of Broken Walls but also Repairers of Broken Hearts.

Navy weeds out designer drug users

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – Navy implementation of synthetic drug testing for synthetic chemical compounds like "Spice" and "Bath Salts" is helping the service close ranks on Sailors who use these prohibited and dangerous substances, officials said July 2.

"Navy has zero tolerance for drug abuse. Drug abuse, including use of designer drugs and synthetic compounds, by members of the Navy is incompatible with high standards of performance, military discipline, and readiness as embodied by of 21st Century Sailors and Marines," said Rear Adm. Tony Kurta, director, military personnel plans and policy.

Navy reviews its testing of synthetic compounds continuously, and also continually responds to production of new controlled and synthetic compounds, changing testing procedures and pacing the changes being made by producers.

Navy has analyzed more than 3,300 urine samples for synthetic chemical compounds since testing began in March, with 101 samples testing positive. Authorized testing under the synthetic drug testing program is conducted under member consent, command directed, unit and/or subunit sweep.

NCIS will be notified of every positive sample for possible further investigation with a view towards potential disciplinary or adverse administrative action by the service member's command.

Spice is a synthetic chemical compound that is sold as herbal incense and mimics the effects of the drug marijuana. A ban was placed on five synthetic cannabis compounds commonly found in the designer drug Spice, but also sold under different names.

Some of the short-term effects include auditory and visual hallucinations, painless head pressure, panic attacks, time distortion and delirium. Long-term effects from the designer drug can include permanent physical impairment, mental illness or death.

Another synthetic chemical compound, bath salts are sold under the common names: Vanilla Sky, Ivory Wave, Pure Ivory, Purple Wave, Charge+, Ocean Burst, and Sextacy. Bath salts are a potentially addictive powdered substance that is snorted, smoked or injected. They can have an adverse effect on the heart, circulation, nervous system, similar to ecstasy or cocaine, and result in lethal overdose.

The unlawful possession or use by Department of the Navy personnel of controlled substance analogues (designer drugs), natural substances, chemicals wrongfully used as inhalants, propellants, prescribed or over-the-counter medication or pharmaceutical compound with the intent to induce intoxication, excitement or stupefaction of the central nervous system is prohibited via SECNAVINST 5300.28D. Violators are subject to punitive action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Article 92.

Navy's Synthetic Drug Testing Operating Guide is posted on the Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Office (NADAP) website and contains procedures for commands to request synthetic drug testing and synthetic drug testing information.

The Navy's zero-tolerance policy towards drug use is a key contributor to the readiness area of the 21st Century Sailor and Marine. To view the guide or for more news from NADAP, visit www.nadap.navy.mil.

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