Fleet Mail Center delivers piece of home

Story and Photo by Sky M. Laron,
NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka Corporate Communications

From the first letter a sailor is sent at boot camp to the care packages received while deployed, the mail is a constant in the lives of the Fleet and their families.

Sailors, Marines, Japanese Master Labor Contract (MLC) and United States Civil Service (USCS) employees at NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center (FLC) Yokosuka's Fleet Mail Center (FMC), located in Yokohama, work around-the-clock to ensure timely delivery of military mail for a wide variety of supported commands in the region.

"I remember what it's like being on the ship and I always try to put myself in their position," said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Luis Ortega, FMC Lead Petty Officer. "You understand how much those letters and packages mean to them."

Providing the best possible postal services in support of 7th and 5th Fleet, 18 Forward Deployed Naval Force (FDNF) ships, 30,000 military and civilian personnel and all mobile units operating in the Pacific Area of Responsibility is an enormous task that FMC employees deliver on daily.

"We serve all homeported ships in Japan, all visiting or transiting ships in the 7th Fleet and those ships transiting to the 5th Fleet, to include all mobile units, squadrons and detachments," said Otilio Santos, FMC Postal Manager. "We also serve the commands onboard Yokosuka Naval Station, Ikego housing, Negishi Housing, Naval Air Station Atsugi, Camp Zama, Tokyo Embassy, Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Iwakuni, Commander Fleet Activity Sasebo to include Hario housing, and Okinawa."

The volume of mail processed is a constant to the bases but the fleet mail volume depends on where the ships are operating, Santos said.

Annually the FMC processes more than one-million pieces of mail at a total weight of nearly 16 million pounds.

"There is definitely a lot of heavy lifting that we do," said Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Chris Adams, FMC Logistics Specialist. "But you know the mail you are passing along is from family and friends and is reaching people on deployment, giving them a little piece of home."

Delivering that piece of home and ensuring the mission is accomplished are what members of the FMC work on continually.

*See **FMC** pg. 12*

LS2 Randy Justice, mail router for NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka's Fleet Mail Center, updates his routing board to ensure an up to the minute picture of current ships schedules and future movement to include upcoming Replenishments At Sea (RAS) schedules.

Photo courtesy of NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka Corporate Communications

Tohoku Helping Hands still Committed to earthquake, tsunami victims

By Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Tohoku Helping Hands, a group of community members from on and off base around Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, received a thank you gift of Japanese origami flower balls from those affected by the earthquake and tsunami last year, June 14.

"We started [the group] right after the earthquake. Lots of people were leaving on the departure including many people from this base. While they were gone, the ships, the base, they did their part for Operation *Tomodachi*.

When the people came back, they also wanted to do something. So they donated many things, clothes, food, soap. And when Operation *Tomodachi* ended, people still wanted to help," explained Misako Sulivan. "That's when we started 'Tohoku Helping Hands."

The group started with just a few local community members from on and off base. They continued to gather donations and bring the collected items to people from Tohoku and other hard hit areas.

The people living in these areas sometimes lost their homes, jobs, a way of life, and loved ones. Shelters took some in but were having trouble meeting the needs of all those who sought help.

"Some of the people started moving into this prefecture, we thought we could go visit them. We brought donations. I can remember bringing sandals and they were gone almost immediately. One girl held them like they were a precious treasure," said Sullivan. "I realized that with only a few dollars and I can help these people."

The group of people participating in Tohoku Helping Hands continued to grow. Sullivan explains that soon after starting a Facebook page for the group they received many more questions from people that wanted to help.

Two groups on base, the stores Second Hand Rose and Takusan Treasures, both started donating a portion of their proceeds to the cause.

"The stores are supported by members of the Yokosuka Officer's Spouses Club. Through the club stores regularly donate to different charities. Last year we donated $15,000 and this year we donated another $5,000," said Donna Connor, Takusan Treasures general manager. "When customers come in we tell them that we are a nonprofit organization and that part of the money they spend will go to those families that were displaced last year. Customers really support that kind of giving."

After more than a year working to get donations to those who needed them, Sullivan and the other workers developed relationships with the people at the shelter.

They wanted to give something to show their appreciation to the people that volunteered for the charity.

"They don't have a lot of money, and there isn't many things that they can give, but they do have a lot of time," said Sullivan. "They started making origami flower balls. They make one piece and then take about ten of those pieces to make one flower. Then they take six, eight or ten flowers and connect them to make a ball."

Sullivan estimated that there might be a thousand hours of work that went into making the flower balls, showing a box of more than 50 of the origami works of art.

"It's turned into a great relationship. We couldn't have done it without everyone's help. I'd like to that the YOSC and the two stores and all the families who donated or worked with us. I don't think that everyone knows just how much these efforts have helped the people in the shelters," said Sullivan.

According to Sullivan, she and the other workers will keep Tohoku Hands going until all the families have found a new homes, a new lives.