Junior handler enjoys job, rare responsibility

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Master-at-Arms Seaman Apprentice Michael Bordner prepared to go out on patrol with other dog handlers from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Military Work Dog (MWD) kennel Aug. 17. Bordner is the junior handler at the kennel, which is usually staffed with E5 and above U.S. Navy Sailors.

Bordner, from Fort Pierce, Florida, started his military career later than other Sailors. At 25, Bordner joined the military and headed off to Naval Recruit Training Command but he had made an important career choice before he left.

"I wanted to do something different with my life," said Bordner. "When I was with the recruiter, I had a few jobs I could have chosen; Aviation Ordnanceman, some other ones and Master-at-Arms. After that I went back and looked on the Navy Cool website. I saw that K-9 handler was one of the [Navy Enlisted Classifications] I could get as a Master-at-Arms. I've always been a big fan of dogs and I like seeing what they can do. So, I was interested, I found out what I needed to do to get it right out of A-school, I worked hard and I got it."

Bordner went to school to be a Master-at-Arms at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. Toward the end of the training he requested to be interviewed for the Dog Handler school. To be eligible, Bordner had to pass and do well in all of the Master-at-Arms courses.

"They started with four people," said Bordner. "Then they dropped two of us and it was just me and another candidate. There was no guarantee that they would pick either of us but, during the last week they called me and said that I got it."

All MWD's and MWD Handlers are trained on Lackland Air Force Base, the same base where Bordner trained to be a Master-at-Arms.

"The school was fun, challenging and you definitely learned how to be a handler," said Bordner. "You get bit, you get nipped, you get knocked around and you are kept to the same standards. You have to pass all your tests, you can't fail, you have to stay physically fit. It was tough but it was worth it."

Towards the end of the course Bordner learned that he would not be getting orders to Italy like he thought. He would instead receive orders to CFAY's MWD Kennel. He started working there December 15, 2010.

Bordner said, "When you get to your first command, you realize how basic everything was and you start learning how you actually do all the things you were trained to do."

When Bordner started, he was an E-1 Master-at-Arms Seaman Recruit, four ranks below any of his coworkers. He was assigned a three year old Belgian Malinios (a dog breed similar to a German Shepard) named Ssandor and started working on the team that searches for explosives on and around the base.

"It's got to really be in your heart to do this as an career. If your heart is not in it than that is going to travel down the leash. He works hard and you can tell he's doing a good job with the dog." said Master-at-Arms First Class Marcel Martinez, Bordner's supervisor. "Him and his dog play a big part of our mission here and making sure no explosives make it on to base. He's making sure that when our Sailors go home and they go to sleep, someone is here on watch keeping them safe."

MASA Michael Bordner takes his dog Ssandor through part of part of the obstacle course at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Military Working Dog Kennel, August 17. Bordner is the most junior of the handlers who are usually E5 and above.

Bordner encouraged other junior Sailors to pursue their career goals suggesting that young Sailors with current training can bring diversity and strength to a duty station.

CFAY MWR Outdoor Recreation Center offers drop-off service

Story and photo by Paul Long, CFAY Public Affairs

If you're looking to spend a day, night, weekend, or a week, sleeping under the stars in the great outdoors and don't have any camping equipment, Morale, Welfare, & Recreation's (MWR) Outdoor Recreation Service has a new delivery service for you.

MWR will not only rent you all of the camping gear and according to Jayson Hillard, rentals and campground's manager, "People can rent our camping equipment and have it transported to Ikego's campground."

Tents, chairs, coolers, lanterns, and sleeping bags are just a few of the camping items that can be rented from Outdoor Recreation according to Hillard.

The delivery service, which began in May, is one way, which means you can have what you rented (from Yokosuka) delivered to your campsite in Ikego, and then you can turn it in at the paintball field there.

Hillard said that this delivery service is very popular sailors and is busiest when the ships are in. "Single sailors use it to get off the ship, get away from base, and there are no liberty curfews. That's what they tell me," he said.

MWR's Rentals and Campgrounds Manager, Jayson Hillard, assists a customer with his hiking equipment rental Aug. 23. MWR's Outdoor Recreation also rents and delivers camping equipment to the West Valley of Ikego's campgrounds for a nominal fee.

Master-at-Arms Second Class Aaron Crain, of Ikego's security detachment, said, "They're (E4 and below sailors with white liberty cards) on base property and that it's really no different than renting a room at the BOQ or Navy Lodge."

Hillard also said that any authorized MWR Patron can rent equipment from Outdoor Recreation. "All SOFA-sponsored personnel; military, DOD civilians, contractors, and their families are eligible to use our services," he said.

According to MWR's website, campsites can be reserved up to 30 days in advance and must be paid for at the time of registration. Each campsite accommodates up to 20 people, and includes fire pit and grill. Cancellations can be made no later than 3 days prior to scheduled renting for a full refund.

Outdoor Recreation is located next door to the Fleet Gym and across the street from Berths 8 and 9. Call 241-3709 or 243-5732 for more information.

Hours of operation for Outdoor Recreation are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on holidays and they are closed on Wednesdays.