SRF-JRMC shares holiday spirit with Miura Shiratori-en

Story and photo by Keiichi Adachi, CFAY Public Affairs

More than 50 representatives of the U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center (SRF-JRMC) brought holiday joy to mentally and physically challenged students and residents at the Miura Shiratori-en in Nagasawa, Yokosuka City Dec. 16.

"Today is the 47th time that SRF-JRMC has visited Miura Shiratori-en during the Christmas season," SRF-JRMC Commanding Officer Capt. Steven Stancy said at the start of his speech. "This is my first opportunity to enjoy a wonderful Christmas Party with you. We always look forward with great anticipation to this annual event."

This visit was a joint effort of the SRF-JRMC Friendly Society of Japanese Master Labor Contract (MLC) employees and volunteers from the U.S. military and civilian personnel at SRF-JRMC, who have coordinated and conducted this holiday visit since 1963.

The relationship between SRF-JRMC and Shiratori-en started back in April 1963, with a handfull of U.S. Navy personnel and Japanese employees when the precursor of Shiratori-en, Nagasawa Gakuen, was established as a home for mentally challenged children. Since then, according to a Shiratori-en official, the SRF-JRMC employees have been a "loving light to the staff and residents of Nagasawa Gakuen."

Miura Shiratori-en director Masayuki Onoda said that he is most appreciative of Stancy, the staff of SRF-JRMC, and Hiromu Oomori, president of the SRF-JRMC Friendly Society.

"On behalf of the people who live and use our facility, we really welcome SRF-JRMC members. I was also impressed with the trumpet performance by Captain Stancy."

Homer Kemper, tank coordinator and a zone manager for the SRF Carrier Project Team, volunteered to serve as Santa Claus during the Christmas party. "I really enjoy putting surprised and happy faces on the children," said Kemper. "They see Santa as a very special person in their lives, and I hope those memories will last a lifetime."

The most pleasant gift for the children, however, may have been getting the chance to dance hand-in-hand with the SRF-JRMC volunteers to cheerful holiday music which was played by the SRF-JRMC "Swing Stars" band.

Swing Stars' leader Naoto Momoi said that this was to be his last visit to perform, and that for almost two decades he and his members have performed at the Shiratori-en. "I am going to retire next year. I really appreciate the unseen efforts and support by our division head, coworkers, various shop members and people throughout SRF-JRMC. Without their help, we could not have come to Shiratori-en and played music. Thank you very much," Momoi said.

Onoda said that employees at Shiratori-en are grateful to hear the happy voices of the Shiratori-en residents while they were eating ice cream and cake provided and served by SRF-JRMC military and civilian employees and their family members, and pleased with the music selections by the Swing Stars.

Chief Electronics Technician (SW) Bruce Piland who coordinated the visit said that SRF-JRMC U.S. Navy personnel, U.S. civilians and Japanese employees worked very hard all year to raise money to support the event and to provide financial support for things needed by the facility. SRF-JRMC donated 500,000 yen (more than $5,700) to Shiratori-en this year.

Stancy concluded his speech by saying, "It is heart warming to see the anticipation and happiness in all your faces. On behalf of all SRF-JRMC employees and their families, we wish you good health, happiness, prosperity and peace, now and in the coming year."

SRF-JRMC Commanding Officer Capt. Steven Stancy, a Shiratori-en resident and Shiratori-en Director Masayuki Onoda, cut the cake during the Christmas celebration.
クリスマスパーティーの中、SRF-JRMC司令官スティーブン・スタンシー大佐、園児と三浦しらとり園園長の小野田正幸氏氏によるケーキカット。

Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW) Mario Briolo stated that this is his second time supporting the event, and that he enjoyed doing so each year and looks forward to next's year's event. "I like to see smiles on the faces of people at Shiratori-en. This is a good way to build American and Japanese relations while giving back to the community."

Onoda also mentioned that children who are residents of Shiratori-en voiced their appreciation for the Christmas celebration and that they and the adult residents really enjoyed the cakes, drinks and joining in dancing with the SRF-JRMC Sailors and employees.

SRF-JRMC、三浦しらとり園にクリスマスの喜びを届ける

文・写真：安達慶一、CFAY広報課

昨年１２月１６日、横須賀艦船修理廠及び日本地区造修統括本部(SRF-JRMC)の５０名以上の日米従業員が神奈川県知的障害者施設「三浦しらとり園」(横須賀市長沢)を訪問。園生たちに一足早いクリスマスをプレゼントした。

「SRF-JRMCが皆さんとクリスマスパーティーをするのは今日で47回目です。私にとっては初めてですが他の従業員一同楽しみにしている慣例行事の一つです。」と話したのはSRF-JRMC司令官のスティーブン・スタンシー大佐。

この行事は日本人従業員で構成される親睦会と米軍人・軍属のボランティアらによって1963年から例年欠かすことなく行われている。

SRF-JRMCとしらとり園の交流は、しらとり園が「長沢学園」としてオープンしたばかりの1963年4月にSRFの海軍士官と日本人従業員数名が園を慰問したことに始まった。それ以来、SRF-JRMC従業員はしらとり園の職員と園入居者にとって『希望の光』であり続けていると職員は言う。

しらとり園・園長の小野田正幸氏はスタンシー大佐、SRF-JRMC親睦会会長である大森祐武（ひろむ）氏をはじめとするSRF-JRMCのスタッフへの心から感謝を表しこう続けた。「当園を代表して皆様にお礼を申し上げます。スタンシー大佐のトランペットの演奏は感激しました。」

サンタはキャリアープロジェクトチームのタンク調整・ゾーンマネージャー務めるホーマー・ケムパーさんが演じた。「子供たちの笑顔や驚きの表情を見ることが出来てとても嬉しかったです。子供たちの人生でサンタは特別な存在でありサンタとの思い出は一生心に残るでしょう」とケムパーさん。

Shiratori-en residents and employees, and members of SRF-JRMC joined together to enjoy and share the sprit of the holiday season while the Swing Stars band provided the festive holiday music.
スイング・スターズが演奏する中、しらとり園の園生と職員、SRF-JRMCの従業員が集りホリデーシーズンの精神を楽しんだ。

SRF-JRMC members along with the Swing Stars band sing Christmas carols during the Shiratori-en Christmas party.
クリスマスパーティーでSRF-JRMCの参加者がスイング・スターズの演奏に合わせクリスマスキャロルを合唱する。

様々な寄贈品もさることながら三浦しらとり園生にとり最大のクリスマスプレゼントは、「スイング・スターズ」のバンド演奏に合わせてSRF-JRMCのボランティアが歌うクリスマスキャロルと、彼らが園生の手をとって一緒に踊るダンスかもしれない。

「スイング・スターズ」リーダーの百衣（ももい）直人さんが話すには、２０年近くバンドメンバーとしらとり園で演奏を行なってきたが、今回が彼の最後の訪問と演奏だ。「来年には定年退職を迎えます。我われの部長、同僚、他部署、SRF-JRMC皆さんの陰ながらの努力と支援に深謝します。彼らの援助なしでは我われはしらとり園で演奏が出来なかったでしょう。有難うございます。」

小野田氏によるとケーキを軍人や家族に直接食べさせてもらったり、素晴らしい選曲の演奏を楽しむしらとり園生を見て職員も大変喜んだと語った。

今回の訪問の調整役を務めたETC(SW)ブルース・パイランドさんによると、SRF-JRMC親睦会の呼びかけや米軍人、軍属の協力により、1年を通じて部隊内外の様々な組織やグループからクリスマスパーティーを含む三浦しらとり園が必要とする備品の購入の為の募金が行なわれた。今回は500,000円ほどの寄付が寄せられた。

「期待と幸せに満ちた皆さんの顔を見て心暖まりました。SRF-JRMC従業員とその家族に代わり、来年も皆さんが健康で幸福で平和で実り多き年になるようお祈りいたします。」とスタンシー大佐はスピーチを締めくくった。

今回で２回目の訪問をしたFC1(SW)モーリス・ブリオリさんは、来年も参加したいと楽しい思い出を語る。「しらとり園の人々の笑顔を見るのが好きです。地域社会に貢献し日米関係の向上に役立てればと思います。」

小野田氏はSRF-JRMCのクリスマスパーティーに対する園児らの感謝の意を伝えるとともに、しらとり園に入居する成人もまた飲み物やケーキを楽しみSRF-JRMCの兵士やボランティアと踊れていかに嬉しかったかことかを伝えて下さった。