Sailors, Marines become naturalized citizens during ceremony

Story and photo by MC3 Andrew Smith,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

During a naturalization ceremony held at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Chapel of Hope April 23, 68 foreign nationals from 25 countries took the Oath of Allegiance and officially became American citizens.

Of those who took the oath, 36 were active duty service members from both the Navy and Marine Corps, 29 were military spouses and three were children of service members.

(Left) PS3 Aristi Alejandrino and EN2 Ariel Ancheta take the Oath of Allegiance along with other Sailors and Marines during a naturalization ceremony held at the CFAY Chapel of Hope April 23.

The ceremony kicked off with a special message from President Barack Obama congratulating the attendees on their achievement of becoming American citizens and thanking them for their service.

Because of their service in the armed forces, the attendees were able to apply for naturalization under special guidelines. Outlined in section 328 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), Non U.S. citizens serving in the U.S. armed forces are authorized to become naturalized under special provisions. One of those provisions includes serving one year of honorable service. Most installations provide resources to aid Sailors and Marines through the process.

"The process was somewhat challenging being underway on a ship at the time I was filling out my application," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class (AW) Boris Petrov.

Petrov says the wait was worth it because now that he is a U.S. citizen the opportunities to advance his career are endless.

"It's a great feeling to be a citizen now. I'm presented with a lot of options and I am looking forward to cross rating to master-at-arms now that I have citizenship. Also, now that I am a citizen, I can apply for officer programs and vote. The privileges are immense," he said.

Petrov was born in Bulgaria and arrived in the United States in 2001 with his stepfather. He spent almost two years applying for citizenship.

Since 2004 more than 800 citizens have taken the Oath of Allegiance during naturalization ceremonies, which are held twice a year at CFAY.

Sailors and Marines who attended came from countries throughout the world and serve at installations throughout Japan.

"I come from a very small island and everyone usually goes in the Army, but my sister was in the Marines, and that's what made me join," said Marine Corps Cpl. Kuuipo Trepanier, a native of American Samoa. "American Samoa is a U.S. territory, so I have always been a U.S. national, but you don't get all the same benefits as being a U.S. citizen. I always wanted to be an American, and it's a great feeling to know that I am a U.S. citizen now."

Trepanier traveled from her post at Camp Zukeran, Okinawa to take the oath in Yokosuka.

Each year the United States accepts immigrants from countries all over the world. The three main countries of immigration are currently Mexico, India and the Philippines. In 2008, a record 1,046,539 people were naturalized as U.S. citizens.

Kinnick High Career Day gives students focus on their future

Story and photo by Mark Elrod,
CFAY Public Affairs

To help better inform students of post high school careers, Nile C. Kinnick high school (KHS) held its fourth annual Career Day April 21.

"[The purpose of] Career Day is to give students focus on careers that they can possibly go into," said KHS Career Practicum Teacher Anita Carroll, who was the Career Day organizer. "Many of our students have not decided what they want to do. So, they get an opportunity to look at various careers from people who are professionals and who are in these careers, which could spark an interest for our students."

During the event, KHS had many guest speakers from various occupational fields, such as pilots, meteorology and oceanographers, professional divers, chefs, postal workers, legal professionals, technology based professionals (including some from the robotics field), and representatives from medical and veterinary professions.

There were even employment recruiters on hand for the event.

"So, we have just about every avenue that you can think of, in order to give students a broader scope," said Carroll.

Of all the occupational fields covered, the medical field seems to be one of the more popular with KHS students.

(Left) Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Center (NOAC) Yokosuka Division Officer Lt. Mary-Elizabeth Doty and NOAC Operations Officer Lt. Andrea O'Neill speak to the students regarding their future careers during the Kinnick High School Career Day April 21.

"We have a large population of students who are interested in going into medical careers," Carroll said.

The purpose of the guest speakers is to open the minds of the students to the correlation between their education and professions.

"Students may realize when they hear the speeches, 'Wow! What I'm learning in school is actually used outside the school building,'" said Carroll. "Too many times our students think that our curriculum is only for school purposes."

In addition to guest speakers informing students of career opportunities, there were college representatives on hand to inform students of post high school education opportunities.

According to Carroll, KHS Career Days are vey helpful in helping to start graduating students onto a pathway toward success.

"Students have to hone in on their future careers, juniors and seniors especially, so, [career days] are really important, because it gives them the opportunity to see how it really is," Carroll said. "We, as teachers, can tell them what it is that they need to know, but when they hear it from someone outside of the school, then it becomes more important.

Middle school conducts inaugural Career Day for students

Story and photo by MC2 Byron C. Linder,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Active duty service members and civilians from the Yokosuka area offered a view into their professional lives to students during the Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Middle School Career Day April 21.

The middle school's inaugural Career Day commenced with school principal Geoffrey Fong welcoming students and introducing the 12 presenters in the school cafeteria.

Introductions were followed by a series of presentations covering a myriad of both civilian and U.S. Navy career opportunities, ranging from a Community Bank manager to a U.S. Navy culinary specialist Sailor.

Fong explained the importance of informing middle school aged students of future career opportunities.

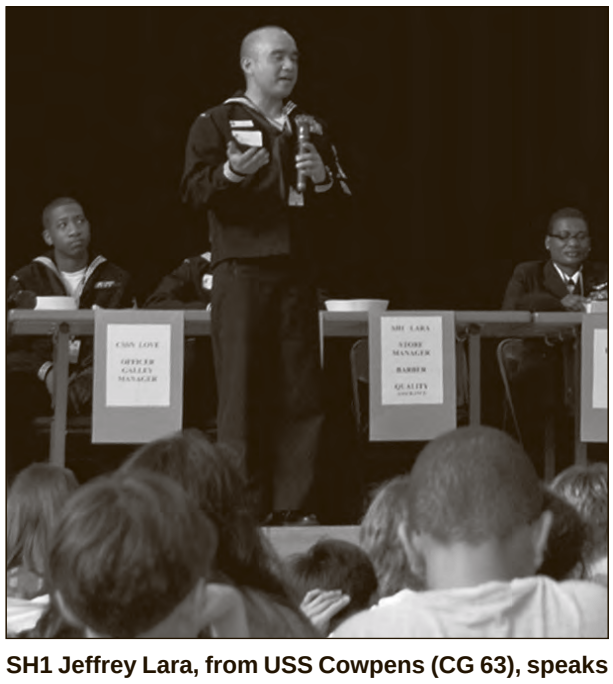
"We want our kids to get focused. In middle school, it's very easy for kids to lose focus and think they're just going to school for the sake of going to school," Fong said. "When we throw in some professional technical studies and some career awareness, I want kids to get interested in different fields, which can lend to the relevancy of our classes."

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Ryan Hevener, a Pemberton, N.J. native and preventative medicine technician at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, expressed his appreciation to share his professional life with the students.

"I came here today to show a fun and interesting job I do in the Navy and to help them get a feel of what a preventative medicine tech does," Hevener said. "I talked about what we do, how we administer the flu vaccine every year, how we collect mosquito samples on base and do disease surveillance. Kids like what we do, they like looking at bugs and having a fun time. This is the most important time to introduce a career path, because every kid wants to be an astronaut or a firefighter or the President and they don't really see the jobs that make a difference every day."

The presenters concluded Career Day with a question-and-answer session, with queries ranging from educational commitments to the logistical requirements of feeding a ship's crew.

"This is good that our kids get to see professionals in the work-world as people; they were once like them and had to make career decisions and commitments," said Fong.



SH1 Jeffrey Lara, from USS Cowpens (CG 63), speaks to Yokosuka Middle School students during a career day presentation April 21.