Ikego Elementary students, parents help clean-up Zushi Beach

Story and photo by MC3 Charles Oki,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Students from Ikego Elementary School worked with students from Zushi Elementary School to clean up garbage and other natural debris on Zushi Beach June 9.

As forward-deployed naval forces, Sailors and their families stationed in Japan are expected to be ambassadors in their host nation.

This project provided the children the chance to get to know their host-nation neighbors, as well as learn about the importance in maintaining the environment - both locally and globally.

"I feel that getting the kids together is a great chance for them to see that they aren't the only ones in this community," said Legalman 1st Class (SW/AW) Marcella Begay, a To'Hajiilee, N.M., native assigned to the regional legal service office. "These kids are all a part of the Zushi community and I think it's important for them to see that they share this area with everyone else."

"We only have one planet and I feel that it's important that we teach our kids now, when they are young, of why they should take care of the environment; eventually they are going to be in charge of taking care of the planet," said Begay.

More than 300 first through fourth grade students, parents and teachers spent the morning picking up trash and vegetation that washed up on the shore. The event was sponsored by the Zushi Beach Club and Zushi Marine Association, both non-profit organizations that take care of the beach.

"It's wonderful to see the American and Japanese students coming out and cleaning the beach together," said Ryuichi Hirai, mayor of Zushi City. "The kids seem very happy to be helping the environment and doing their part in keeping the beach clean."

Scott Finlay, principal of Ikego Elementary School at Fleet Activities Yokosuka, and students conduct a beach clean-up at Zushi Beach June 9. The clean-up included students from Ikego Elementary and Zushi Municipal Elementary School and was sponsored by the Zushi Beach Club and the Zushi Marine Association.

Following the clean-up, students brought their trash to a large tarp where they dumped it out to see exactly how much was collected.

Environmental experts from Zushi city taught the students about the negative effects of beach pollution and biodegradation.

"Today the students got to learn the importance of maintaining the environment," said Ikego Elementary School Principal Scott Finlay. "Especially with the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the students have been learning a lot about keeping the earth clean. With this beach clean up, they can get hands on and not only learn about what garbage will do to the beaches and ocean, but they also get to make a difference."

The Ikego area was originally used by the Japanese in 1937 as an ammunition store house and was opened by the U.S. Navy as a family housing complex in April 1996. 210 of the 710 acres of Ikego are home to 854 housing units and is where approximately 3,400 Sailors and family members call home.

The Chief asks:

"Did you know the first uniform instruction for the U.S. Navy was issued by the Secretary of War August 24, 1791?

It provided a distinctive dress for the officers who would command the ships of the Federal Navy.

The instruction did not include a uniform for the enlisted man, although there was a degree of uniformity.

The usual dress of a seaman was made up of a short jacket, shirt, vest, long trousers, and a black low crowned hat.

"If you didn't know, now you know."

— MCC (SW/AW) Eric Hannah
CFAY Public Affairs

Eel grass planting helps rejuvenate environment

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Local Girl Scouts, Kanagawa Prefectural Fisheries Technology Center, Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Public Works Department (PWD) and divers from the CFAY dive locker all teamed up to help better the environment during the annual Eel grass Planting event at CFAY Green Bay Marina June 5.

"We do a lot of environmental event every year and this particular event helps to revitalize the bay here," said CFAY PWD Environmental Director Charles Schulz.

This was the second time the event was held.

"Last year the Environmental Department did it, and basically they brought hundreds of students and planted eel grass which helps to propagate the fish population here in Yokosuka, so we're doing it again this year with the local Girl Scouts," said CFAY Public Works Department Production Officer Lt. Cmdr. Lakeeva Gunderson. "We are here to show that we are supportive of the community relationship."

Marine plant life helps filter and clean the water as well as proved nourishment for marine life.

"Eel grass is great for the fish to feed on, like the flounder we are releasing here today," said Gunderson. "It's also good for protection of the fish around here and, lastly it's good for erosion control."

According to Schulz the grass helps control erosion, because the roots grow into the sand and help stabilize it. Additionally, the grass offers protection for the marine life.

In addition to planting the grass, like the event last year, Kanagawa Prefectural Fisheries Technology Center provided flounder for the Scouts to release into the marina.

However, this year, the Center provided some tiger blow fish for the Scouts to release as well.

Local Girl Scout members release flounder and tiger blow fish into CFAY Green Bay Marina during an Eelgrass Planting event June 5. The fish were provided by the Kanagawa Prefectural Fisheries Technology Center.

"The population of the fish in the bay has decreased, so we do this annually to revitalize the life in the bay by releasing fish and we plant the eel grass to give them an ecological environment to survive in."

According to Schulz the declining fish population is due to the stresses the fish experience from living in a highly populated and traveled area.

In addition to the stresses, the marine life is fished by local fishermen.

The Eel grass events are fun, yet educational for the youth who participate in them, according to Gunderson.

"It's a very important event for several reasons," said Gunderson. "For one, you're teaching kids about the earth and the [ecological] system and how we need to make sure it continues to grow as they grow. Then secondly, how we, as a community are getting together and making sure that we are taking care of the land that we are on, and are using."

Working together with the Japanese community to beautify the local area does more than just build relationships, according to Schulz.

"It sends a message to the Japanese people that CFAY takes environmental safety seriously here," said Schulz. "We all live here so we need to show our support."

For more information about participating in the Eel grass Planting event next year, contact Charles Schulz at 243-6592.

Local Girl Scout members prepare eelgrass for planting in CFAY Green Bay Marina during an the 2nd annual Eelgrass Planting event June 5. The event was sponsored by CFAY PWD and Kanagawa Prefectural Fisheries Technology Center.