CFAY, FISC first class petty officers beautify Yokosuka with Honcho clean up

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Members of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) and Fleet Industrial Supply (FISC) Yokosuka First Class Petty Officer Associations (FCPOA) came together for a Honch Community Clean Up project July 23.

During the project, which is held quarterly, Sailors picked up trash along Route 16 and Dobuita Street, as well as aboard CFAY on command hill.

"Each time that we come out we get various organizations and tenant commands [to take part]," said CFAY FCPOA President Master-At-Arms 1st Class (SW) Steven Ridgley, of CFAY Industrial Security Office. "Today it was CFAY and FISC, but we definitely try to get more people involved each time we come out."

A lot of Japanese and American foot and vehicle traffic passes through the honch everyday. More so on the weekends when most people are off work. Because of the increased activity, the honch tends to get riddled with trash.

"It is a great opportunity for us to show our appreciation to the local community for supporting the U.S. Navy by helping them clean up the streets that we walk everyday," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate Fuels 1st Class (AW/SW) Joseph Determan, of FISC.

"I think it's important, because it helps us strengthen relations with the local community and the international community," said Ridgley. "We've been invited to cohabit here, so we want to get out and help maintain the area that we both occupy. It is essential we continue to help maintain not only the local community, but our community."

Projects, such as the Honch Community Clean-up, help Japanese who may feel slightly uneasy about service members, or Americans in general, to see them in a different light.

SK1(SW/AW) Salvador Hugo picks up trash along Route 16 outside of CFAY during a Honch Community Clean Up project sponsored by CFAY and FISC FCPOA July 23. The project, which is held quarterly, is meant as a demonstration of commitment to the local community by helping to keep the streets of Yokosuka clean.

"As we all know, there have been some incidents in the past that tarnished the relationship between Sailors, Marines and Japanese nationals," said Store Keeper 1st Class (SW/AW) Salvador Hugo, of FISC. "The Navy and the military itself is all about giving back to the community. This is one of the great opportunities to show to our host nation that we care about their community. So, by committing ourselves into various community programs, this shows that we value and respect their country and promotes a more harmonious relationship with them."

"When I can get a chance to help out any Japanese or community I do my best to take part, it gives me a since of pride that I am making the relationship between Japanese local citizens and the military better," said Determan. "They see that we are taking a conscious effort to keep our community clean, by picking up all the trash. So, they might feel that we do care about their community and would be more appreciative of us being here."

Though the usual participants are service members, Ridgley would like to see more members of the on base community such as family members, Japanese Master Labor Contract employees and civilian employees get involved in the projects as well.

"It's good that we can all get out, network and communicate amongst each other to help strengthen relations between everyone," said Ridgley. "So the local community doesn't see a specific group [of people], they're seeing [the diversity] here at CFAY."

Yokosuka Sailors, students participate in local charitable tradition

By MCSN Wilbert D. Dow, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Most Tuesday evenings for the past five years, Windsor "Steve" Ancheta stuffs a backpack full of snacks and drinks before placing it over his shoulder and walking toward a shopping mall located next to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), where he meets up with Sailors and parishioners of the Mikasa Catholic Church to distribute food to Yokosuka's less fortunate.

Ancheta, a retired master chief master-at-arms, who currently works as a family life and education specialist at Yokosuka's Fleet and Family Support Center, believes the volunteer work done by all in the program is worth the effort.

"Being a part of this is a very humbling experience," Ancheta said. "The people who volunteer to do this spend their own money on the food they hand out and take time out of their schedule to help people. Just the thought of someone doing that feels good, so imagine what it feels like when you participate in such a thing."

Despite rainy weather conditions July 28, the volunteer group gathered outside the shopping mall at 7:30 pm and walked to various city locations, sharing the food with those who need it.

Ancheta said efforts by the local church and volunteers to feed the homeless in the area dates back further than his arrival in Yokosuka.

"It is a volunteering tradition that dates far back for their church," he said. "In the colder months they organize functions where people can receive a hot cooked meal."

For some of the Sailors and students from Nile C. Kinnick High School, walking the streets to feed the homeless and down on their luck is a new experience.

For the last two months, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Petty Officers Tiffany Gilchrist and Montelimar Copeland, both stationed at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, enjoy being a part of the program.

"I think it is always good to give," Copeland said. "It gives you deeper look at the community we are in. For most of us, this is our first time in Japan and to see that we can help make a difference off base in the community is a good feeling."

Equipped with individually wrapped sandwiches she made, Gilchrist said charity work like this enhances the friendship between CFAY and its host city.

"I think this is a great way to link the base even more with the community," Gilchrist said. "When the ships are in from their deployments, there are so many more volunteers out here giving out food to the homeless. It is good to see people on base giving."

Ancheta said the volunteer effort of the Sailors working side-by-side with local community groups is a reflection of the quality of people who serve and live on base.

"No matter how big or small, when you are giving [back] to people it is rewarding," Ancheta said. "It is like the old saying goes, 'If you share something of yourself, you live forever.'"