CFAY Summer Camp brings art to masses with mural project

By Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Student's art projects and pictures have graced the refrigerators in their homes for generations. It's a tradition. A way for parents to display their children's work to family and friends while reminding kids how much their work is appreciated.

Well, refrigerators are no longer the exclusive venue of local student artwork. Family and friends can join thousands in seeing student artwork just by driving along the seawall down Route 16 in Yokosuka.

Over the past three weeks, about 20 students and staff from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Moral Welfare and Recreation (MWR) School Age Care Summer Camp have ventured outside the gate to paint a special mural as part of a local community art project.

The mural, which was chosen along with nine others out of a field of 91 submissions, depicts a group of multinational children united around a globe, according to project leader and Recreation Specialist Keiko Whitaow.

"There are six different boys and girls from all over the world, and they are helping the community with recycling and cleaning up the neighborhood," said Whitaow.

Sponsored by the City of Yokosuka, the program is designed to help bring more beauty to Route 16 by allowing those who live or work in Yokosuka to paint murals on the barrier which separates the city from the bay. Other selected murals depict coastal landscapes, deep sea adventures and a variety of abstract themes.

But, for students, it was more than just helping to make a daily commute a little more scenic or bringing art to the masses, it was a mural with a message.

"This is to help Yokosuka be a better place," said 10-year-old fifth grader Jailyn Brown who helped to paint the mural. "It's a picture of us helping Yokosuka."

According to Whitaow, the program has been a big hit with students. They have braved the heat and humidity to come out, almost daily, for an hour or two to work on the project.

"Being outside, off base, enjoying the weather and being out there with their friends is the most important part of the project," said Whitaow. "And I think this is really the first time for them to use real paint and paint [a mural]."

But in the end, when it comes to kids, the best part can sometimes be the reward for a job well done.

(Left) MWR employee Tom Kiper helps students from the School Age Care Summer Camp trace the initial outline of a mural on a seawall along Route 16 Aug. 6. The mural, which was selected by the City of Yokosuka to be painted on the wall as a part of an art contest, depicts kids from around the world united to help the planet. Photo by John Sullivan

"I buy them ice cream when their done," said Whitaow. "They love it!"

If you would like to see the students completed mural, exit the CFAY main gate and make a left turn. Stay in the left lane and follow Route 16. You will pass stores such as "Livin" and "PC Depot." About 4.5 kilometers from the base, on Route 16, you will begin to see murals on your left. The Summer Camp project is the second mural.

Military Working Dogs: safeguarding military bases worldwide

Story and photo by Fumiyo Sato, CFAY Public Affairs

Military Working Dogs (MWD) and their handlers are deployed worldwide in support of the global war on terrorism and play a significant role in safeguarding military bases. Currently, seven military working dogs are serving abroad Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) MWD Division. Of the seven, two of them are deployed to Africa and Iraq.

"The purpose of having military dogs here in Yokosuka is to ensure that we provide the base and the fleet safety when it comes to vehicles coming on board and to ensure that no type of suspicious activities are being performed here on the base," said MWD Kennel Supervisor Master-at-Arms 1st Class Allan McGathey.

Since a dog's nose contains up to 225 million scent receptor nerves, compared to the five million receptors in the human nose, military working dogs can detect narcotics, explosives, illegal currency, gas leaks, arson accelerants and illegally imported food, according to the Department of Defense (DoD) Puppy Program Web site. At CFAY, the role of the military working dogs ranges from patrol dogs to drug detection or explosive detection.

Military dogs have to be either German Shepherd or Belgian Malinosis because of their superior ability to perform these tasks.

"The dogs are initially procured from numerous places to include Germany and the DoD Puppy Program," said McGathey. "They are chosen through the procurement process where they test on different abilities that they show when they are still young puppies. They go through training required at Lackland [Air Force Base in Texas] through explosive, drug, or patrol training. Once they pass their certification, they are sent out to the fleet."

According to the Lackland Air Force Base Web site, the 341st Training Squadron is part of a global effort to breed working dogs for the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. These dogs are a vital part of national defense capabilities. In cooperation with various national and international agencies, the Puppy Program was established to emulate the success of other breeding programs for raising working service dogs.

Master-at-Arms (MA) Sailors who go through a MWD handler's course at Lackland are eligible to work with the military dogs. They maintain the kennel and train and take care of the dogs daily. The training schedule is made according to each individual dog's ability.

"I would say that the most challenging thing about training the dogs here at CFAY would be our extremely high demand for deployment throughout the world and to ensure that we have enough time to dedicate solely to dogs to train so that they can perform their duty proficiently," said McGathey. "We are also involved in all the activities on base [such as] Friendship Day events and special VIP visits."

CFAY MWD Division MA2 Matthew Dietes guides Military Working Dog Capa through a training course Aug. 5. There are seven Military Working Dogs assigned to CFAY, two of them are currently deployed to Iraq and Africa in support of the global war on terrorism.

Military working dogs usually serve in the military for 10 years until their retirement. "Most of the time, we would like to ensure that the dogs are adopted by the handlers before they go back to Lackland to be a training aide," McGathey said.

"I would say that MWD [division] feels like it is an extremely rewarding job and we are definitely a vital asset to the Navy and its mission," said McGathey. "I would encourage all the young Master-at-Arms out there, if they are interested in getting into this type of rewarding field, they should definitely seek out assistance in going in this direction."

Distracted driving

By CFAY Safety Office

From Jan. 1 through Aug. 1, there have been more than 400 traffic accidents involving personnel with vehicles registered to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY). If we continue this pace, we will surpass last years' total of 644 traffic accidents.

Many of these accidents were minor in nature, but could have been avoided if the drivers were paying closer attention to detail while driving. CFAY Safety personnel conducting traffic surveys have seen drivers eating, drinking, texting, talking on cell phones, putting on makeup and a host of other things, which puts them and everyone else on the roadway at risk.

To reduce your risks when driving, here are a few tips for the different distractions you need to avoid.

Fatigue: Get a good night's rest, have someone drive for you, use public transportation and know the effects of any medication you take.

Emotions: Know what gets you upset and try to avoid those situations, calm down before you get behind the wheel of a vehicle, expect others to make mistakes on the road and avoid conflicts while driving (such as heated discussions with passengers).

When operating a vehicle you should be focused on that task alone. Automobile technology has much to offer to make you a safer driver, but it requires your attention to make its use applicable. Eat your meals at the table, take care of your hygiene before you leave home, find time to read when you are relaxing, slow down and never, ever use a cell phone or text when driving. Keep your head on a swivel and maintain full situational awareness at all times. Remember the acronym SEE (Search, Evaluate, and Execute); know where you are going and ensure it is clear before you proceed. I guarantee that, the trees, poles and other fixed objects will remain clear of you.