Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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CFAY Town Hall Meeting addresses community issues, questions

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen addresses a question during a town hall meeting here, in the Benny Decker Theater Oct. 14. Town hall meetings are an open forum for the local community to inquire about issues and concerns, as well as voice ideas they have about the community in which they live.

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Editor's note: The questions and answers from the Oct. 14 CFAY Town Hall Meeting will appear in the Oct. 29 Seahawk.

Members of the local community gathered to meet with department heads and representatives from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) commands for a town hall meeting here, in the Benny Decker Theater Oct. 14.

Town hall meetings have a long history in the United States. According to the Dorchester Athenaeum online, the first recorded gathering of voters in America took place in Dorchester, Mass., in 1633. Since then, town hall meetings have been open forums for people to speak their minds on local matters.

In fact, one of Norman Rockwell's paintings, "*Freedom of Speech*" depicts his neighbor, Jim Edgerton, airing an unpopular opinion during a town hall meeting in Arlington, Vt., where he lived at that time. However, instead of objecting to Edgerton's remarks, his fellow citizens honored his right to free speech.

Likewise, the CFAY Town Hall Meeting is an open forum for local community members to inquire about issues and concerns, as well as voice ideas they have about the community in which they live.

For CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen, it was his first town hall meeting since assuming command of the base.

During the meeting, Owen explained to the attendees the results of the investigation into a recent vandalism incident at The Sullivans Elementary School, which caused a lot of damage to the school.

"That was all done by two individuals," said Owen. "Both have been expelled from the school; both, I have debarred from the country, or at least off the base. One of them is already gone, and the other will be leaving shortly. They will not be back on this base ever again."

Owen explained that in addition to the debarment of the perpetrators, the parents paid approximately $10,000 in restitution to the Parent Teacher Organization to cover the estimated damages to the school.

Owen also commended the local volunteers who came together to clean up the vandalism.

"The community did great, 400 people showed up and cleaned up the school that very night, so it was ready to go the next day, which was fantastic, because it shows how we can all pull together," said Owen.

Regarding the punishment for the youth who committed the vandalism, one community member asked Owen, "So, then when they get sent back to the states, do they then just carry on, or do they have a criminal record?"

Owen responded to the question stating, "Seeing as they are minors, they won't have a criminal record."

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Newest citizens welcomed during *GW* naturalization ceremony

Story and photo by MC3 Jacob D. Moore, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

Sailors from *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*), the embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 and *USS McCampbell* (DDG 85) became the United States newest citizens after being sworn in during a naturalization ceremony held in the *GW* forecastle Oct. 9.

The 22 Sailors involved in the ceremony hail from Mexico, Thailand, Ghana, the Philippines and Jamaica.

Representatives from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services were on hand to administer the oath of allegiance and presented the Sailors with their certificates of citizenship. *GW* Commanding Officer Capt. David Lausman was the guest speaker.

Sailors from *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*), the embarked Carrier Air Wing 5, and *USS McCampbell* (CG 56) take the oath of allegiance, becoming U.S. citizens during a naturalization ceremony held in the *GW* forecastle Oct. 9. The 22 Sailors naturalized hail from Mexico, Thailand, Ghana, the Philippines and Jamaica.

"You are now our nation's newest citizens," Lausman said. "This is a privilege I know you will not take for granted. Today, we are proud to call you our fellow Americans."

"The opportunity for anyone to go through this process and a ceremony like this is special. It's priceless," said Commander Task Force 70 Rear Adm. Dan Cloyd, who was a guest at the event. "Not only are they doing this aboard a ship, which for Sailors has significance, but the ship is the namesake of one of the founding fathers of our country, which makes it even more special."

Event coordinator Legalman 1st Class (SW/AW) Ignacio Tercero said he was honored to put together such a ceremony.

"For me, this group represents the fabric of America. There are so many different people from so many different countries. Our nation's diversity is what makes us so unique and we are out here protecting the freedoms that we all have," said Tercero, who is originally from Mexico and was naturalized in 1995. "I do this because I went through the process myself and I enjoy seeing people getting the same opportunities as me."

McCampbell Culinary Specialist Seaman Jian Xu, cited freedom of speech as one of the best things about becoming an American citizen.

"It's a really big day for me, changing my citizenship from Chinese to American," said Xu. "Unfortunately, in some countries people are not allowed to speak about certain things, but now I am an American and I can defend my country and use my freedom of speech whenever I want, and the military gave me that. Now I feel like I am one hundred percent a part of it."

As well as being a unique opportunity combined with a unique location, being naturalized while aboard a Navy ship also had other advantages. *GW* Air Department Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class Karllian Brown and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Rushelle Martin, both from Jamaica, said they chose to be naturalized aboard the ship because fees are waived because of military service. Also, they did not have to wait until they were back in Yokosuka, Japan or the United States to be naturalized.

The ceremony proved to be a memorable and life-changing experience for all of the new citizens.

"It's just funny how I'm on a ship named after George Washington, I'm in the Navy, forward-deployed and after nine years, I'm finally getting my citizenship," said Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 27 Sailor, Aviation Structural Mechanic (Equipment) 2nd Class Alejandro Ramos, who hails from Mexico. "People used to ask me where I was from. It doesn't matter anymore. We're all Americans now!"

INSIDE

Cowpens Sailors donate time, supplies, smiles in Thailand

***USS Cowpens* (CG 63) Sailors brought smiles and supplies to the students of Chuck Niau Elementary School in Pattaya, Thailand Oct. 4.**

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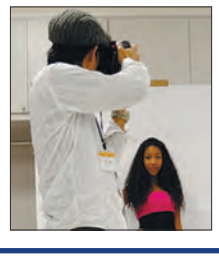

FFSC modeling fair offers shot at being next top model

Residents crowded the Community Readiness Center auditorium looking for a chance at stardom at the FFSC Yokosuka Work and Family Life Office modeling fair Oct. 9.

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