Cowpens Sailors donate time, provide smiles in Thailand

By Lt. j.g. Maxwell Schmidt, *USS Cowpens* Public Affairs

More than 20 Sailors from *USS Cowpens* (CG 63) volunteered their liberty time Oct. 4 to bring smiles and supplies to the students of Chuck Niau Elementary School during a recent port visit to Pattaya Beach, Thailand.

The Community Service (COMSERV) project was organized by *Cowpens'* Command Chaplain, Lt. Kermit Jones Jr., and coordinated with the Navy League. Sailors worked side-by-side with students from the school to paint an exterior wall which badly needed the facelift. When they weren't painting, the Sailors played soccer and other games with the children, giving all involved a broad range of opportunity to interact with the local children.

After the painting and activity time ended, the Sailors held a brief ceremony in which they delivered more than $2,000 worth of educational supplies that were donated by the recently closed pre-school cooperative on Yokosuka base. The supplies included educational toys, crafts, and other items that will be useful in teaching the students.

When asked to teach the 300 students a song, Sailors chose "*I'm a Little Teapot*," bringing delight to the children as they were "tipped over and poured out." The children ranged in age from kindergarten to 6th-grade, and all were excited to practice their English with this new song.

"It seems a little corny to be singing [the song]," said Lt. j.g. Jordan White. "But it's new to the kids, and they couldn't get enough of it."

After the ceremony, *Cowpens'* Sailors were treated to the students' demonstration of their cultural heritage, with singing, dancing and a traditional Thai meal.

"The food was surprisingly good for an event like this," said Operations Specialist 3rd Class Jesse Alfaro. "The children and teachers really made us feel like we were at a home away from home."

In addition to donations to the school, Cowpens also worked with the Navy League and Chantanimit Rotary Club to donate two dozen mattresses to clinics in need. Volunteers from the Rotary Club picked up the mattresses and delivered them to several facilities along the Thailand-Cambodia border.

Because of this recent COMSERV, *Cowpens* has already well surpassed its command goal of 2,000 hours of community service during the 2010 calendar year.

***USS Cowpens* (CG 63) Sailors HTFN Davonadra Ann Hasley, OS2 Gerald Crawford, RP3 Keeshaun Coffey and OS3 Jesse Alfaro serve lunch to children of the Chuck Niau Elementary School as part of a Navy League coordinated community service project Oct. 4, during the *Cowpens'* recent port visit to Pattaya Beach, Thailand. U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Kermit E. Jones Jr.**

"After every community service project, I am proud of the widespread attitudes of charity and cheerful service demonstrated by *Cowpens'* Sailors," said *Cowpens* Commanding Officer Capt. Robert Marin. "When I established the command goal of 2,000 hours of community service, I had no idea the crew would respond with such vigor."

School for the blind visit leaves Sailors with lasting memories

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

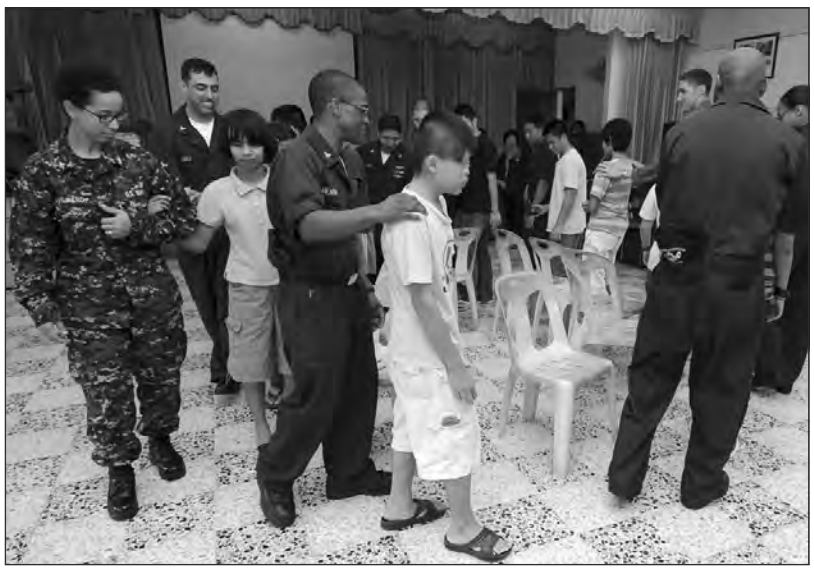
Approximately 20 Sailors from *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) and the embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 were given the opportunity to talk to and play games with children at the Pattaya Redemptionist School for the Blind during the ship's port visit to Pattaya Beach, Thailand.

The event was one of several community service projects planned and organized by the ship's Command Religious Ministries Department.

The Sailors were welcomed by the students with a traditional Thai musical performance followed by an informational video detailing a brief history of the school and what it offers its students. Next, Schit Suknoo, the school's computer instructor, who is also blind, demonstrated various computer programs and software that allow the blind to use word-processing software such as Microsoft Word. Students then showcased other abilities including beadwork, knitting, crochet, typing and the ability to read and write in Braille.

The latter half of the event gave the Sailors and students the opportunity to meet each other, talk, have fun and play games including rock, paper scissors and musical chairs.

"I am very happy that you could come here. I appreciate that you live so far away from us, but you still think about us and do things for us, and the social skills that meeting new people gives the kids will last them there whole life," said Suknoo. "It is good for them to be able to meet people not only from outside of their community, but outside of their country. I think the children are very impressed by you."



Sailors from *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) and the embarked CVW 5 play musical chairs with students at The Pattaya Redemptionist School for the blind Oct. 5. Approximately 20 Sailors visited the school to talk and play games with the students as part of a comunity service project scheduled during the ship's port visit to Pattaya, Thailand.

But it was the Sailors who were truly in awe of these young children and what they've been able to achieve.

"It's pretty amazing how these kids can overcome this challenge and that there are institutions like this out there to help them," said Aviation Electrician's Mate 2nd Class David Sumida of Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 115.

Approximately 130 students ranging in age from 3 to 20 are currently enrolled in the school. Students stay at the facility throughout the semester, but return to their families when school is not in session.

The school receives minimal government funding and is supported mostly by the donations of local citizens.

The event seemed to be a positive and memorable experience for everyone involved. When it was time for the Sailors to leave, all of the children were smiling and the volunteers had nothing but positive things to say about their experience.

"It was good! For some reason I have a soft spot when it comes to kids," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) Airman Roberto Fulgencio. "To know that there is a place like this for them here is great."