Flu immunization campaign readies community for winter months

By Ben Avey, USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka concluded a highly successful influenza (flu) immunization campaign Dec. 1 after vaccinating more than 7,000 individual beneficiaries in a two-month period on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka and its Negishi and Ikeog housing detachments.

The annual immunization campaign coincides with the traditional start of flu season and is conducted to immunize a large segment of the community, including active duty service members, family members and other eligible beneficiaries against the two most common strains of flu and the H1N1 virus. Immunization against the H1N1 virus, which topped headlines last year when it became a pandemic, has been incorporated into this year's immunization, eliminating the need for two different vaccinations.

"Beneficiaries only had to get one vaccination against the flu this year and we provided a lot of opportunities for that to happen," said USNH Yokosuka Director for Public Health Cmdr. Paul Brochu. "From a public health perspective and customer service perspective, we were very successful this year."

The immunization drive kicked off in late September with influenza specific immunization clinics concluding Nov. 30. Five clinics for family members and civilians were held in between dozens of clinics at shore based tenant commands which focused on vaccinating emergency personnel, healthcare workers and active duty service members.

USNH Yokosuka saw an increase in the total number of vaccinations given to beneficiaries compared to the previous year and credits the success to increased public awareness about the importance of flu prevention and improved access to the immunization earlier in the year.

"We're pleased with the number of opportunities we were able to provide the community and the level of engagement they had with our flu prevention efforts," said USNH Yokosuka Preventive Medicine Department Head Lt. Cmdr. Michael Termini whose department is responsible for the immunization drive. "Whether you are active duty or a family member, we all have a mission to complete and maintaining our health readiness with flu immunization enables us to do just that."

USNH Yokosuka HM3 Gloria Lee administers the nasal spray FluMist® to a four-year-old beneficiary during this year's flu immunization campaign. USNH Yokosuka declared the recent mass immunization campaign a success after vaccinating more than 7,000 eligible beneficiaries on board CFAY and its Ikego and Negishi housing detachments.

Photo by Richard McManus

Flu immunization is mandatory for most active duty service members and recommended for everyone older than six months. Certain groups of beneficiaries including pregnant women, people with asthma or diabetes and those older than 65 are highly recommended to get immunized due to potential for flu related medical complications.

Active duty service members and other eligible beneficiaries who were not able to get immunized at one of the mass immunization clinics can visit the hospital immunization clinic during normal business hours for flu vaccination.

To learn more about influenza, the vaccine and its benefits, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov/flu.

FISC Marine Liaison Detachment continues Toys for Tots campaign

By H. Sam Samuelson, FISC Yokosuka Office of Corporate Communications

Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka U.S. Marine Liaison Detachment is spearheading the 2010 annual U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY).

The program was instituted to get new, unwrapped toys into the hands of less fortunate children who may not get to experience the joy of Christmas. It also unites all members of local communities in a common cause for three months each year during the annual toy collection and distribution campaign; and to contribute to better communities in the future.

"We're not in competition with Santa Claus," Toys for Tots drive Vice President Gunnery Sgt. Javier Andino said with a smile. "As Marines, we like to stay active in whatever community we serve."

Unlike Santa, the Marines are not waiting until Dec. 25. They're collecting now. Toys for Tots drop boxes for new, unwrapped toys are located at the Navy Exchange as well as the Community Readiness Center across from the commissary.

Some of the collected toys are already slated for delivery.

FISC Yokosuka Marine Liaison Sgt. Marcia Middleton will accompany the toys to local children's home Shunko Gakuen Dec. 7, through a local holiday community children's support program coordinated by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service Far East Detachment, with the orphanage.

In fact, Marine Corps Toys for Tots coordinators invite all community service volunteers who work with children to consider using donated toys as part of their programs.

"I'm very excited to participate in the Toys for Tots program and I can't wait to see the children's' faces when we deliver them their toys," said Middleton.

The FISC Marine Liaison Detachment will be accepting toys for the Toys for Tots program through Dec. 22.

"While the U.S. Marines are more often associated as a threat of force, we are also a humanitarian force," said FISC Marine Liaison Detachment Director Capt. Aaron Warby. "I can think of no better way to win hearts and minds – even of enemies – when the see the compassion of our nation and the Marines hand out holiday toys donated by the American people."

Warby says, in the five years FISC Yokosuka Marines have coordinated the program, more than 5,000 children in the Western Pacific have received toys.

"Most people see only professional warriors," Warby added. "The Toys for Tots Program shows the soft hear of the Marine Corps."

(Right) FISC Yokosuka Marine Corps Liaison Office Sgt. Ato Waithe accepts a new, unwrapped toy from a donor at the Yokosuka Navy Exchange. More than 5,000 toys have been donated by the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program in Yokosuka since FISC Yokosuka Marines began coordinating the program five years ago.

Photo by Yohsuke Onda

The FISC Yokosuka U.S. Marine Liaison Detachment provides logistics support for forward-deployed Marine forces in the Western Pacific.

The editor asks:

"Did you know, the American version of the Santa Claus figure received its inspiration and its name from the Dutch legend of Sinter Klaas, brought by settlers to New York in the 17th century?

"As early as 1773, the name appeared in the American press as "St. A Claus," but it was the popular author Washington Irving who gave Americans their first detailed information about the Dutch version of Saint Nicholas. In his "*History of New York*," published in 1809 under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, Irving described the arrival of the saint on horseback each eve of Saint Nicholas.

"This Dutch-American Saint Nick achieved his fully Americanized form in 1823 in the poem "*A Visit From Saint Nicholas*" more commonly known as "*The Night Before Christmas*" by writer Clement Clarke Moore. Moore included such details as the names of the reindeer; Santa Claus's laughs, winks, and nods; and the method by which Saint Nicholas, referred to as an elf, returns up the chimney.

"In North American poetry and illustrations, Santa Claus, in his white beard, red jacket and pompom-topped cap, would sally forth on the night before Christmas in his sleigh, pulled by eight reindeer, and climb down chimneys to leave his gifts in stockings children set out on the fireplace mantelpiece."