Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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Annual tree lighting ceremony kicks off CFAY holiday season

Children crowd around Santa Claus waiting their turn to talk to him as parents take pictures during the fourth annual CFAY tree lighting ceremony at the red-brick area in front of the commissary Dec. 1.

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) kicked-off the holiday season by hosting its fourth annual tree lighting ceremony at the red-brick area in front of the commissary Dec. 1.

"This pretty much kicks off our holiday season," said CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen, during his opening remarks. "We'll be lighting these trees up every night from now 'til the end of the year."

Although it was the fourth annual ceremony, this year, the event was slightly different than before.

"We've expanded it," said Owen. "The very first time we did it, there were only three trees. Tonight we're lighting up 10 of them all at one time.

The event featured cookies, hot cocoa, and some gifts, which were raffled off to the people in attendance.

"We can't do this without a lot of help and some special [thanks]," said Owen. "Of course MWR, which set up and coordinated the entire event; the NEX (Navy Exchange), which has donated some gifts… ; DeCA (Defense Commissary Agency) and the other venders for all your hot cocoa and cookies.

"I think it's outstanding! The kids are having a great time; they're eating cookies, they're drinking cocoa; they got some prizes; they got to see Santa Claus," said Owen. "This is a great event."

During the event, children donned elf hats and sang Christmas carols to the crowd. Also, the 7th Fleet Brass quintet performed several Christmas songs for the crowd.

"We love Christmas carols, so we wanted to be here to hear the music," Barbara Servance, who was in attendance with her husband and son. "I think it's exciting and fun."

Santa Claus traveled from his home in the North Pole to hand out the presents that were raffled off to the kids.

Afterward, the raffle winners sat in Santa's sleigh. The crowd began a countdown and the children helped Santa push the button to light all 10 trees in Yokosuka and the trees in Ikego and Negishi simultaneously.

The instant that the trees lit up, the crowd cheered in unison.

"The turn out was great… this was probably one of the biggest turnouts we had for this event, said Owen. "It gets the community together, it helps them to recognize that we've entered the holiday season and it gives them some information about the NEX and commissary."

CFAY Sailors cheer Yokosuka neighbors into holiday season

By MC1 Geronimo Aquino, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Yokosuka base Sailors and civilian employees visited with members of the local community to hail the holiday season with a "Disco Dance Party" at the Sogo Fukushi Center Dec. 3.

The community relations (COMREL) project, sponsored by the Yokosuka Lions Club is an annual end of year holiday event for local disabled citizens.

Masaharu Tsuchimura, a Lions Club member and one of the organizers, said they invited participants with disabilities from 13 different Sangyo-Jo (training sites), a place where handicapped people learn marketable skills in arts and food, to join Sailors for the party.

"When I heard about this Christmas Disco Party, I jumped on the opportunity to sign up," said Operations Specialist 2nd Class Tyrone Hill from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Transient Personnel Unit (TPU). "It makes you understand that there are other people with challenges in life and makes you appreciate how they meet their challenges. It makes things look a little brighter for the world in your own perspective."

All the event participants, including the welfare center staff and organizers, wore party cone-hats and started the party with noise makers, following loud beats of disco music that filled the Christmas decorated hall.

"It is fun, just follow the rhythm, keep dancing, and they will follow you. Our smiles overwhelmed the language barrier," said Operations Specialist 2nd Class Melioner Gacuya assigned to Fleet Coordinating Group.

"I like their culture, they are very polite and I would like to give back in a small way by being part of this special occasion, which I believe meant a lot to them," Gacuya added.

During a break in the music, the visiting Sailors and their hosts enjoyed a Hawaiian dance show, a quick game of basketball and some much needed refreshments.

"This is good for the community and it is a good way to bring us closer as neighbors," said Gacuya.

(Right) OS2 Tyrone Hill, assigned to CFAY Transient Personnel Unit, and his wife Giesyl Olasiman Hill dance with a local citizen at the Yokosuka Sogo Fukushi Center during a Christmas Disco Dance Party community relations event Dec. 3.
U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Jennifer A. Villalovos

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***Mustin*, 7th Fleet Sailors bring joy to Cambodian children**

Sailors from *USS Mustin* (DDG 89) and the 7th Fleet Orient Express Band visited the Goodwill School in Sihanoukville, Cambodia Dec. 4.

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Laugh Laugh Japanese helps you learn the language

Learn to ask where the train station is or ask your Japanese neighbors a few questions about themselves with the new Japanese Language class now being offered at FFSC.

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