

Marking 42 Years of Service For Navy Ombudsman Program

By Commander, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Commands throughout the U.S. Navy will recognize their Ombudsmen and the 42 years of service supporting the Navy and Navy families Sept. 14.

On this day, the Navy recognizes the thousands of individuals who volunteer their time, talents and energy to making a difference in the lives of Navy families.

These volunteers help them during all phases of deployment, disasters or crisis. They are also there to assist with the everyday questions and challenges facing Navy families.

"I am proud to be associated with the extraordinary people volunteering as ombudsmen and prouder still of their service at this critical time in our nation's history," said Monika French, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) ombudsman-at-large. "We owe it to all our Navy families to continue supporting the Ombudsman Program."

The Ombudsman Program was introduced to the Navy on Sept. 14, 1970, by CNO Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, in Z-gram 24, as a means to address issues and concerns that are unique to Navy families. While the date is significant to the history of the program, commands are encouraged to celebrate the event at any time deemed appropriate during the month of September.

Most ombudsmen are the spouses of active duty or selected reserve members of the command. The Navy family ombudsman is a highly-trained volunteer who is able to offer support and guidance to command families and to act as an official liaison between the command and its families.

The Navy Ombudsman plays an important role in the success of a command's mission. Ombudsmen are the first step for family members to turn to during a crisis, guiding Navy families to the proper resources they need. That, in turn, helps their Sailors with assurance that their families are being taken care of at home.

"When command members know that their family has a resource to go to for assistance, they can concentrate on the mission at hand," said French. "It is the Navy's goal to ensure that every Sailor and family member has access to the services of a command ombudsman."

Family readiness is a primary factor to a Sailor's personal and mission readiness. Ombudsmen continuously demonstrate just how vital they are to helping our Navy families maintain a state of constant readiness. Whether it is for deployments, disasters or crisis response, they keep the information moving.

According to Lisa Johnson, Commander, Navy Installations Command Ombudsman program manager, the Ombudsman Program is in place to assist the Navy family member and give them an avenue to receive the support they may need in tough times.

"Ombudsmen are not meant to solve problems, but to direct the family member to the people who can help them solve their problems," said Johnson. "Ombudsmen are not meant to "be" the help, but to connect the family member "to" the help."

Connecting Navy families to help is what the Ombudsmen have been doing for 42 years. They volunteer their personal time to ensure the Navy is ready 100 percent of the time.

"It is a pleasure to serve along-side a group of dedicated, caring volunteers," said French. "I want to thank the past, present and future Navy Ombudsmen and wish them a very happy anniversary. I look forward to working with you all."