

Christmas: Seabees are among the 1,000 local volunteers enhancing the community

Continued from A-1

of a variety of local merchants, community groups, and of course, the Seabees.

Seabees are recognized for their humanitarian work throughout the world. According to Pacific Fleet Seabees Command Master Chief Justin Frehlich, it would only be appropriate to have as many skilled Seabees helping the efforts as possible.

Seabees contributed their expertise to five of the 15 projects this year, ranging from yard work to re-roofing an entire house. Construction Battalion Unit (CBU)-413 and Naval Station Self-Help provided three teams.

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1 Detail Hawaii set forth with two teams, and Commander, Third Naval Construction Brigade (THIRD NCB) also augmented the effort, bringing along with them family members and friends to assist at their job sites.

"My father's group joined up with a church youth group, and together, we did lots of small jobs. Some people were digging weeds, and the rest of us were working on the windows or painting," said 14-year-old Josh Boughton, whose father is a Seabee at Third NCB. "These people are so happy to have us here, and the work is not that hard on us. It's definitely worth it, and it's fun to do!"

Florence Okazaki stood at her door in disbelief as the Bees took charge of the day's tasks. Overwhelmed by the kindness of their efforts, her voice trembled, "The Seabees and the church youth group came right in and got to work."

"They are both wonderful organizations and I cannot begin to describe how much this means to me. There's no way in the world that I would have ever thought that people would come out and do things like this."

"We painted the exterior trim of the house, and all of the railings and windows, replaced all window screens, gutters and completed other minor tasks around the house," said Aiea Project House captain Steel Worker Chief (SCW) Derek Allen. "Seabees do this type of work all of the time, but it is not every day that we get the opportunity to work with such a great organization for such a great cause," said Allen. "I think people realize that we are not just here to defend our country, but to enhance the communities we live in as well."

According to Rebuilding Together Hawaii President Debbie Behm, some affiliates organize their work in a one-day blitz while others work over several weekends. The unskilled volunteers join with skilled tradespeople, painting, cleaning, and weatherizing and doing carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work.

One of the more extensive projects was in Pearl City at the home of Kelvin Chock, where several Seabees joined forces with a local roofing company to re-

move and replace the existing roof.

"This is the second weekend in a row Chip and his crew has come to my house," said Chock.

"Since I had my stroke, I just can't do the kind of work that needs to be done around here. And my house was really starting to look like the sore spot in the neighborhood. I'm so grateful they are here, and I still can't believe how much work they've done in such a short time."

Seabees actually completed the majority of the skilled work the weekend before under the direction of Builder 1st Class (SCW) Ernest "Chip" Snyder of CBU-413 Self-Help who served as House Captain for the crew.

"Other members from Self Help, including my co-captain, Equipment Operator 1st Class Leo DeLeon and myself came out here last weekend, along with BU2(SCW) Ron Burke and Shorekeeper 1st Class Timothy Bounthaphanya. We tore off the roof of the house, which was desperately in need of replacing, and J & F Roofing came in and put in a new one," said Snyder.

Homeowners must be low-income and elderly, disabled, or families unable to do the work themselves. Individual families are referred through neighborhood associations, churches, synagogues, community organizations, and service groups, or by self-referral.

"When we showed up, you could hardly see the house at all because of all the overgrown trees and wild plants," said crew member Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Matthew Hanks of Branch Medical Clinic, Kaneohe Bay. "By the end of the day, you could tell Chock was really happy to be able to walk in his yard again, and enjoy what turned out to be some really beautiful landscape."

"We had chainsaws and weed-whackers going on one side of the house, hand saws pulling back brush on the other side, and volunteers picking up branches and pulling up stumps and weeds all over the front of the house," described Burke of the day's task.

"And the best part was the enthusiasm from the volunteers. Each project had two hospital corpsman on the site, and even they couldn't resist putting aside their primary function and lending a hand in the efforts."

According to area coordinator David Muldoon, it's the volunteers who make Rebuilding Together the success story that it is, and those volunteers with construction backgrounds are always well put to use.

"The Seabees are definitely a commodity that we are grateful to have," said Muldoon.

"As long as we can continue Rebuilding Together Hawaii, we hope to continue the working relationship we have with the Seabees and the Navy community, and we hope they keep coming back year after year."



Tevita Matavle scrapes the fascia with a metal-toothed brush to prepare it for a fresh coat of paint.

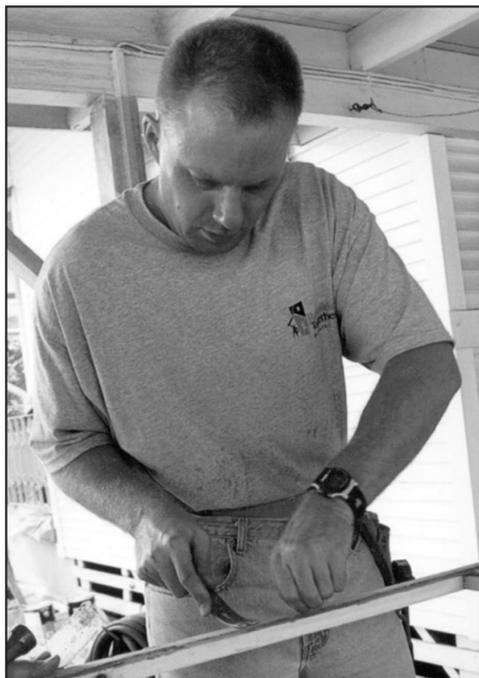


Tara Anderson digs deep to find the root of the problem, in order to ensure the overgrown weeds do not return. One of the requested tasks of the homeowner was to clear the yard of unwanted wild plants. Tara joined 11 other members of her church group to team up with the Seabees at the Aiea House project.



(Left to Right) Third Brigade's CUCM(SCW) Thomas Gomes and his wife, Brigitte, assist BUC(SCW) John Boughton with the placement of the new screens for the window frames.

Aiea House Captain BUCS(SCW) Mike Dyer removes the staples from a window frame in preparation to replace the screen and repaint. A total of 12 full size windows were repaired.



HM3 Angela Solem of the Radiology department, Naval Medical Clinic, brushes down the railings before adding two new coats of paint. Each site had two medics attached to the team who not only looked out for the health and welfare of the volunteers, but worked along side them as well.

Photos by
JO3 Traci Feibel