

# FLEET FOCUS

## Fletcher Sailors participate in Winner's Camp renovation



USS Fletcher photo

More than 30 USS Fletcher (DD 992) sailors and their families joined other MIDPAC ship and shore volunteers high above Hawaii Kai, on Kamehame Ridge on April 21 to clean up several vandalized buildings.

### By USS Fletcher Public Affairs

More than 30 USS Fletcher (DD 992) Sailors and their families joined other MIDPAC ship and shore volunteers on April 21 to converge on a few vandalized buildings high above Hawaii Kai, on Kamehame Ridge.

The extremely neglected, four single story buildings, defiled with graffiti looked more like a hang out for delinquents than what Fletcher will be continuing to help it become home-base for an organization known as Winner's Camp, headed by Delorese Gregoire.

Delorese is an enthusiastic and energetic woman who is the founding director of Winner's Camp ([www.winnerscamp.com](http://www.winnerscamp.com)). She started the residential accelerated learning program 15 years ago, but the camp has not had its own home-base.

"I was in foster homes my entire life," she explained. "And not to even have a home for my camp!"

She set out on a quest this year to find a place for Winner's Camp and she succeeded. Kamehameha schools will be leasing the property to the group for 40 years in exchange for allowing their students to attend the week long leadership courses.

Winner's Camp seeks to make a positive, sustainable difference in teenagers' lives by providing a program which uses open communication as the main tool for growth.

"We get them to speak from the heart," said Delorese.

The project will require approximately \$1,000,000 in labor and material, despite being a non-profit organization. The organization, therefore, is relying on volunteers and donations from the community.

Pearl Harbor's chapter of the Surface Navy Association immediately embraced the project.

Fletcher sailors were intent upon contributing to this worthy cause, remembering their exten-

sive experience renovating buildings while doing community relations work in East Timor.

"I always love giving my time in projects like this," stated Information Systems Technician 1st Class (Surface Warfare) Scott Parker, whose wife Lehue accompanied him for the day's "destruction effort."

Fletcher crewmembers piled on the white Navy bus at 7:30 a.m. on their day off, including the Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Dell W. Epperson.

Wide awake, everyone busily slugged down water, wisely preparing for the day of serving the community twice.

Battling the traffic of H1 and the hills of Hawaii Kai, the sluggish bus swayed its way up the narrow road which leads to the work site.

Sailors groaned and joked as they looked over the side of the bus, down the cliffs to the gorgeous ocean below and behind, to the inside of Koko Crater. All cheered as Boatswain's Mate 2nd

Class (Surface Warfare) Woodrow Smith pulled into the overgrown parking lot by the dilapidated buildings. "Now's when I can breathe a sigh of relief," smiled Smith, after his treacherous and beautiful drive along the ridge.

The future home of Winner's Camp is comprised of four one-story cinder block buildings with large all-purpose rooms and smaller rooms. By all appearances, this former Nike missile site had become a favorite party spot for graffiti artists, who littered the grounds with sun-bleached beer cans; their tag names, images of aliens, and rusted aerosol paint cans scattered the buildings.

Smashed windows and frames, urinals and toilets, torn ceiling panels, broken flooring tile, no running water, weeds in every crevasse, grass and trees untended. Fletcher sailors were overwhelmed and excited. They saw a ton of work to do and a pile of tools.

The project manager, a former hospital corpsman senior chief, pulled out his bullhorn and directed everyone to the tasks at hand after an introduction and expression of gratitude from Delorese Gregoire.

Lawnmowers and weedwackers hummed, hammers sent the sound of smashing tiles echoing through the buildings, rakes dragged along the patches of asphalt. Fletcher's Junior Sailor of the Year, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class (Surface Warfare) Karl Youngquist, well known for his physical strength, was nicknamed "Sledgehammer" by Epperson.

"Certainly we have to give the award for most impressive destruction effort to Doc," remarked Epperson.

The former structures of doors, window frames, lighting fixtures among others seemed to fall down at the mere suggestion that another swing was on its way from Youngquist's massive

arms.

Within an hour, all the tiles and old fixtures were removed from the first building and a crew had already begun on the second. Piles of old tiles, wood and porcelain stood in heaps in front of the door ways. Information Systems Technician 3rd Class (Surface Warfare) Robert Taylor and Engineman Fireman Daniel Polk neatly raked dead grass, branches and weeds along the perimeter of the newly mown lawn.

Fire Controlman 2nd Class Jeremi Runyan attacked the edges with a weedwacker. Electrician's Mate 3rd Class (Surface Warfare) Jean Rempart traced electrical systems and succeeded in getting some light-bulbs to illuminate.

All the volunteers worked so quickly and efficiently that lunch, provided by the Surface Navy Association, was served an hour early. After lunch, the rubble in the last buildings was finally removed and everyone teamed up to haul wood to an enormous dumpster, which the crew filled to the top.

All the goals for the day's work had been completed nearly two hours earlier than expected—and Fightin' Jack's crew had the sweat on their brow, bandages on their hands, and smiles on their faces to prove a job well done.

The Winner's Camp hopes to complete its renovation for camp opening on August 1 of this year. USS Fletcher plans to continue assisting this organization in their quest to provide a haven of self-improvement for teens.

The buildings, once restored, will be a location of great beauty and inspiration. The majestic views from the ridge, which include Hawaii Kai and the Waimanalo Coast, will help teens remember that we have already been given so much.

As the Winner's Camp's motto says, "We get what we give." The cycle of gift and grace needs our hard work to keep in motion.

## USS Chicago helps Shriners Hospitals in namesake city

Elise Wachspress, Vickie Walter  
SHRINERS HOSPITALS PUBLIC RELATIONS

Sixty quilts, designed and stitched by the wives of the crew of the USS Chicago (SSN 721), a nuclear attack submarine, are being donated to the Shriners Hospitals for Children as a demonstration of the long-standing friendship between the crew and representatives of the city of Chicago.

For the past 15 years, a group of Chicago businessmen and women called the 721 Club has been supporting the crew of the USS Chicago.

When the nuclear attack-sub was commissioned in September 1986, 76 prominent Chicagoans on the commissioning committee joined Evanston-born Charleton Heston and the late Mayor Harold Washington to send the ship off in style. The group donated paintings and photographs of Chicago; china, silver, and crystal for the sub's tables; curtains for the bunks with the city's skyline; and a duffel bag of Chicago memorabilia for each member of the crew.

After the ceremony, the group, facilitated by the public affairs committee of the Union League Club, resolved to become a

permanent support group for the crew. They adopted the name "721 Club" from the sub's hull number, SSN 721, and invited crewmembers to fly at the club's expense to visit Chicago in order to develop a kinship with the city.

Every Christmas since then, the club has continued to send the crew (about 160 strong) duffel bags packed with candy, cookies, pens, pencils, flashlights, calendars, clothing, and sports items with Chicago logos.

Several years ago, the ship was to be out during Christmas, and club members decided to send a toy for each of the children of the

crew. Since that year, the club continued sending a toy or book, hand-chosen and hand-wrapped, to each of the nearly 130 children of crew members.

The club also contributes to the women's group to support parties for the children during the year and to the Recreation and Welfare fund on the ship to keep up the Sailors' morale while they are out to sea.

Once a year, club members travel at their own expense to throw a dinner dance for the crew. In January, about 50 members traveled to Pearl Harbor, the sub's current home port, to host the party, to visit the USS Arizona

Memorial and the USS Missouri, to tour Hickam Air Force Base, and to sail on the USS Chicago.

While the group was there, they were privileged to attend a briefing by the Joint Task Force - Full Accounting, the group charged with resolving the cases of those servicepeople missing in action around the world.

The crew is usually deployed out to sea for six months at a time, and Claudia Prince, wife of the current commander of the ship, started looking for an activity to occupy their wives and girlfriends over the long deployment. A devoted quilter since her grandmother taught her the skill at age five, Prince encouraged the women to quilt with her.

Now expert and prolific quilters, they chose to quilt as a way to repay the kindness of the 721 Club. Since Bob Burkhardt, a founding member of the club, is an emeritus member of the board of Shriners Hospital in Chicago, the women elected to make quilts for each of the 60 inpatient beds in the hospital.

Shriners Hospitals provide orthopedic and craniofacial surgery and spinal cord injury rehabilitation at no charge to any child under the age of 18.



## Hawaii Air National Guard commanding general visits USS O'Kane

By Ens. Jacquelyn K. Duquette  
USS O'KANE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

USS O'Kane (DDG 77) hosted Brig. Gen. Putt Richards, commanding general of the 154th Air Wing of the Hawaii Air National Guard (HIANG), and Col. Peter Pawling, the Guard's OG/CC on April 24.

The visit was a precursor to joint force maneuvers between O'Kane and HIANG conducted April 25-26. Richards and Pawling were curious to learn more about the AEGIS Destroyer that would be controlling eight of the Air National Guard's F-15 air superiority fighters during air intercept controller drills. Eager to further develop this joint force relationship, O'Kane invited the HIANG commander for lunch and a tour.

Wardroom etiquette and the masterful culinary talents of O'Kane's Senior Chief Mess Specialist George L. Dann and MS1 Earl R. Stegmeir, sparked the first inter-service comparison. "Does the O'Kane eat this well every day?" wondered Richards.

The conversation then turned to the more serious questions of retention programs and operational tempo. The general was impressed by the long months Sailors must spend at sea away from home and family.

They noted that their Air National Guard members also spend some time overseas — they were some of the first American ground troops in Bosnia and are

currently rotating in and out of tours in the Persian Gulf. HIANG airmen may not stay in the Gulf as long as Navy Sailors, but, O'Kane and the HIANG agreed, the missions of the two complement each other and serve the same goal of maintaining stability in the region.

After lunch completed, O'Kane's Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Taylor W. Skardon, led the distinguished visitors on a tour of the ship including spaces representative of every department on the O'Kane. Special effort was made to highlight the Air Control configuration in CIC and to introduce the Sailors who would play key roles in the April 25-26 exercises.

While in the Combat Information Center they met Operations Specialist 1st Class Heather Elizabeth Waltz and OS1 Jeffrey D. Pratt, two of the Air Intercept Controllers who worked with their F-15s.

On the foc'sle, Gunner's Mate 2nd Class Douglas E. Waller explained the five inch, 54 caliber gun and the Close-in Weapon System (CIWS). GM2 David L. Brown gave a tour of the forward Vertical Launch System magazine (VLS). The tour also took the General through main engine room two where Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Mechanical) 1st Class Bryan G. Paull showed them that HIANG wasn't the only one with "jet engines."

As parting gifts, Richards and Pawling received O'Kane ballcaps and a standing invitation to return to the ship, maybe



U.S. Navy photo

even for a little sea time. Pawling commented that he'd enjoyed his visit so much he "might even have to switch to the Navy"

— a definite complement to the O'Kane and a positive sign for future joint force initiatives.