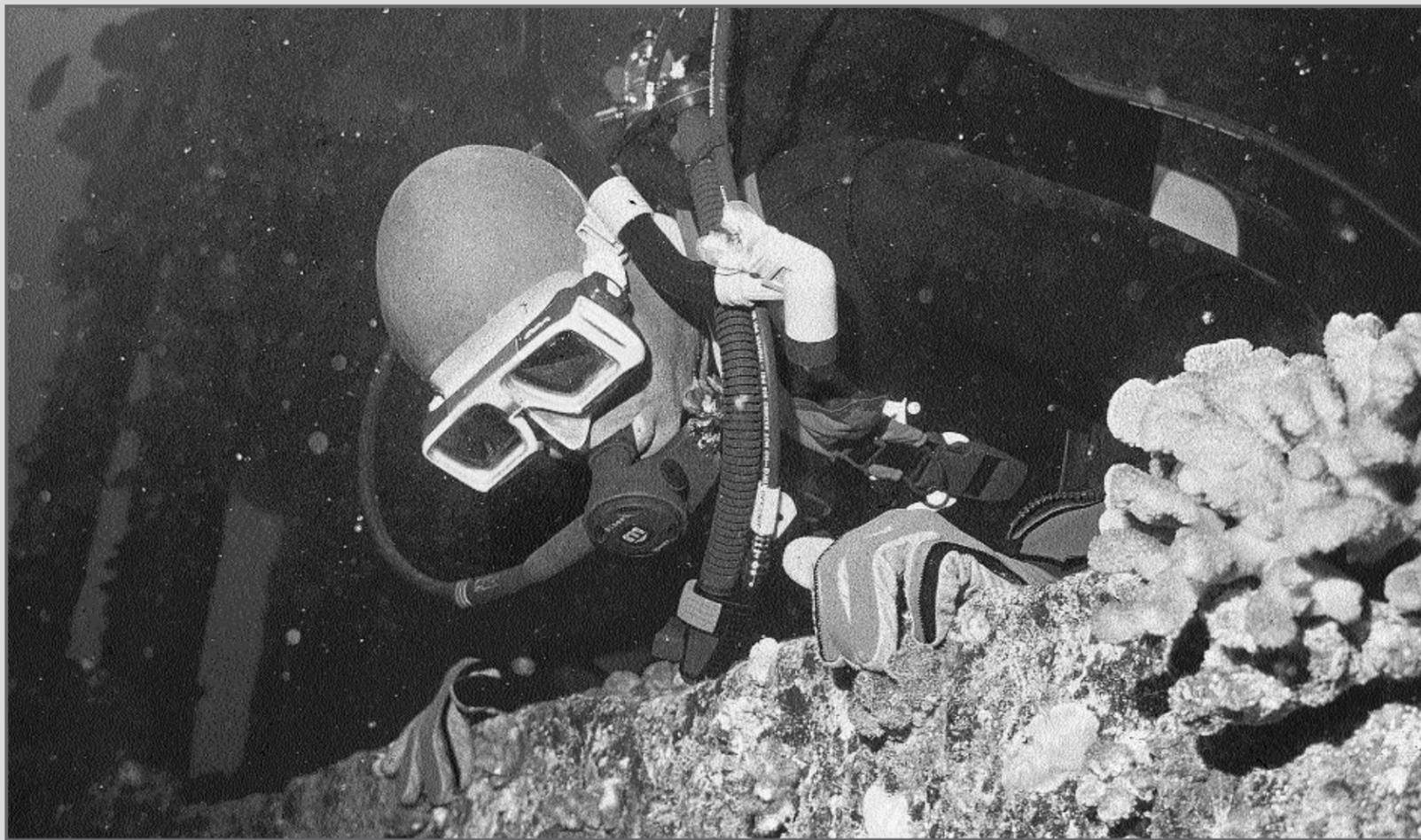


LIBERTY CALL

MWR reaches out to Sailors with Outreach Program



RMC (SW) Ken Cone photo

A servicemember goes scuba diving at the Mahi Wreck, off the coast of Waianae which is one of the most popular diving sites on Oahu. Ocean Enterprises is MWR's onbase diving facility, which offers diving classes and much more for beginners, intermediate and advanced divers and snorkeling. Diving is one of the many exciting adventures offered to servicemembers and their families by MWR.

MWR Outreach Program offers Sailors unique programs and activities

By Susan Holl
MWR

NAVY Hawaii's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center is a treasure trove of recreational opportunities for Sailors and Marines stationed here at Pearl Harbor and neighboring military bases. With so much to offer, MWR Marketing Director, Frank DeSilva felt that the most direct way to get the word out about MWR was to go directly to the customer and give them a personal indoctrination to the "Navy's best homeport."

"I felt that we were doing a good job getting the word out on all our various MWR facilities and activities," said DeSilva. "We were placing information on display boards, writing news articles, using kiosks, posting information on our web page and sending out messages. But we lacked the one-on-one, up close and personal contact with our patrons, which is an essential part of a great marketing effort."

DeSilva wanted to create a position for an outreach program coordinator. He presented the idea to Cmdr. J.G. Fahling, executive officer for Naval Station, Pearl Harbor. Fahling agreed that an outreach program would enhance MWR's marketing efforts and saw to it that the position was established.

In May 1999, Debby White was hired as promotion specialist in charge of the MWR Outreach Program. Her job is to present information regarding Navy Hawaii MWR's programs and facilities to newcomers at all shore commands, ships, and submarines located at Pearl Harbor, Naval Computer Telecommunications Area Master Pacific, West Loch and Lualualei. The Outreach Program allows current and future MWR patrons the opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions or offer comments directly to an MWR employee.

"I think moving around and living the military life-style was the best preparation for this job," said White. "The experience helps me relate to people and understand their needs."

White feels the Outreach Program is essential for people that are new to Hawaii because the majority of them are so far away from the support of family and friends.

"It's important for them to know what is available to them. Where they can get information on where to go and what to do in Hawaii," she stated. "Getting involved with our MWR programs and activities unique to Hawaii allows our patrons to experience all the great resources

at an exceptional value."

Most of White's presentations are scheduled as part of a command's indoctrination briefing or as part of general military training. On average, she visits about eight commands per week. She comes to each presentation with folders for all attendees chock full of information on what MWR has to offer. Each presentation runs approximately 45 minutes with time for questions at the end.

"This is a great program because I get to hear comments, ideas and questions from people who have been stationed at bases all over the U.S. and sometimes other countries. They all have different ideas as to what MWR should be and what they have to say is very helpful to us in developing the best programs and activities possible," says White.

White compiles a weekly report on all the commands she's been to and addresses the remarks made by those in attendance. Her report serves as a tool in targeting programs that need improvement.

"MWR has so many awesome programs...people don't use them because they don't know about them," says White who, in order to present her subject well, has actually taken a few of MWR programs herself. She recently became certified as an open water diver through Ocean Enterprises, is currently participating in a racquetball league sponsored by the Wentworth Pro Shop and enrolled in their upcoming sand volleyball clinic.

"I honestly believe this is the best thing we've done in years," said DeSilva. "The more people hear about Debby's presentations, the more calls I get requesting her to come and speak to new personnel," said DeSilva. "The feedback has been truly outstanding. People are saying, 'Finally, we have someone we can talk to about MWR! It's great to have someone giving us the latest updates on what's happening.'"

After recently briefing the crew on board USS Louisville (SSN 724) the sentiment was equally positive.

"I thought the presentation was great, it blew me away," commented Sonar Technician (Submarines) 1st Class (SS) William Wright. "Briefings like this one are especially great for the single guys who either live in the barracks or on board ship and don't have the opportunity to hear about these things."

"We really do appreciate this," added Storekeeper Seaman (SS) Tyheem Sweat, a new crewmember on the Louisville. "I came from Kings Bay, Ga., and we didn't have anything like this - the presentation was really helpful."

If your command is interested in holding an MWR Outreach briefing contact White at 473-0770.



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Servicemembers (above) enjoy a day of outrigger canoeing through an MWR program. A submariner (left) pitches a softball during one of the many softball tournaments offered by MWR. A servicemember (below) takes advantage of the inline hockey rink on Naval Station, which is also run by MWR.



file Photo