## Tomodachifostered friendships continue

Hiroko Tamaki / Pfc. Brianna Turner

Oshima Island, Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture, is one of the places where the March 11 tsunami wreaked havoc. When the island was left without water and electricity, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit delivered food, water and hygiene supplies in conjunction with the Japan Self-Defense Force as part of Operation Tomodachi. The MEU also assisted local government authorities and personnel in removing debris.



(top) Nodoka Onodera, a student from Oshima, and Mariah Esskuchen break the language barrier and build a friendship during the home-stay program, which took place Aug. 6-9. 8月6-9日に行われたホームステイプログラムで、言葉の壁を越えて友情を築いた小野寺和ちゃんとマリア・エスキューシャンちゃん。 (left) Asuka Kikuta says goodbye to her host family, Claire Haas (right) and Anne Haas before the departure after spending four days together Aug. 6-9. 8月6-9日の4日間を一緒に過ごした後、ホストファミリーのクレア・ハースちゃん(右)やアン・ハースさんとの別れを惜しむ菊田明日香ちゃん。

hotos by Hiroko Tamaki

Under the blue skies of Okinawa, one August afternoon, children from Oshima Island played water games with American peers and young Marines at Camp Foster's 25-meter swimming pool. The scene was a far cry from the horrors the children experienced in mainland Japan just a few short months ago.

The children came to Okinawa for a four-day home-stay program Aug. 6-9 that was hosted by Marine Corps volunteer families. The 25 students and four chaperones from Oshima Island visited Okinawa to experience temporary relief from a stressful environment and build a mutual trust and partnership between the U.S. and Japan, according to Marine Corps officials.

Participating students ranged from 5th to 8th grade and were selected based on an essay contest sponsored by the Disaster Response Center in Oshima.

"I don't know if I would have wanted to try the home-stay if it had been a regular program," said Asuka Kikuta, a 13-yearold student. "I wanted to meet the Marines who helped Oshima's recovery."

Service members who helped the program made good impressions on many of Oshima's citizens.

"U.S. service members always show a smile. When they are on duty, I see they work hard to help others," said Akira Kikuta, a middle-school student.

During a pool party held as a part of the exchange, Maj. Gen. Peter J. Talleri, commanding general of Marine Corps Base Camp Butler and Marine Corps Installations Pacific, expressed his thanks to the students, chaperones and host families for their participation in the program.

"There were numerous families who volunteered because they wanted to make the Japanese families a part of their own, and I wish you could hear the laughter and joy I have witnessed from them the past few days," said Talleri.

The hosts did everything they could to entertain the students and chaperons.

"I asked the students what they wanted to do and told them I would make their wish come true," said Keiko Singerhouse, a host for two boys from Oshima. "They

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Hironobu Sugawara, a member of Kesennuma City Assembly and head of the delegation for the home-stay program, speaks about Oshima's experience during the March 11 tsunami during his presentation on Camp Foster Aug. 8. Representatives from municipalities on Okinawa were invited to listen to the presentation and ask questions, in order to improve their emergency responsiveness. He also talked about the help the residents there received from the Marine Corps. "On April 1, 177 Marines with equipment landed at Oshima," said Sugawara. "We offered transportation but they knew we were short of fuel, so they walked about 1.7 kilometers carrying heavy items. When the Marines arrived at the site where they removed debris, the first thing they did was line up and offer a prayer for the victims. I was truly moved." 8月8日、キャンプ・フォスターで、3月11日の津波での大島の経験を話 す気仙沼市議会議員でホームステイプログラム引率者の菅原博信さん。沖縄県内の市町 村職員も招かれ、今後の緊急事態対応策に役立てるため菅原さんの話を聞き様々な質問 をした。菅原さんはまた、海兵隊から受けた支援についても話した。「4月1日、177名 の海兵隊員と重機が大島に上陸しました。車を出そうと申し出ましたが、燃料が無い のを知っていて重い荷物を背負って1.7キロを歩いてくれました。現場に到着してすぐ にした事が、犠牲者へ黙祷を捧げることだったのです。それを見て感動しました。」

## た友情を大切に

31海兵遠征部隊は、自治体と協力してがれき撤去作業も支援した。衛隊が「トモダチ作戦」の一環として食料や水や日用品を届けた。大島では、水道や電気の供給が止まった際、第3海兵遠征部隊と 空では、11日の は、水道や電気の供給が止まった際、の津波で大きな被害を受けた地域の 5海兵遠征部隊と宮城県気仙沼市 人のた

ィアで受け入れるホ 2名と保護者4名を海兵隊の家族が 参加者を一 ムステイプログ

に溢れる姿を、

プログラムを支えた海兵隊員たちの印象は良

八のために一所の人はいつも笑

生徒や保護者に楽しん

wanted to experience both Okinawan and American culture, so I took them to the movies and the aquarium, and we alternated between American and Okinawan restaurants to give them a variety of experiences here."

Some chaperones had concerns about the language barrier, but it proved not to be a problem.

"I was anxious because I didn't know how hard the language would be for my daughter, but the welcoming smile of our hosts melted down the language barrier and I learned we can communicate without language," said Kumiko Sugawara, whose 11-year-old daughter attended the program.

Mina Onodera said she and her daughter Nodoka enjoyed their stay in Okinawa and time with the home-stay program."

shared with their host family.

"My daughter cried last night because she did not want to leave," said Onodera.

Thanks to the home-stay program and the Marine Corps, the children were afforded a chance, for a time, to be freed from their worries about the problems facing them and their parents at home, said Hironobu Sugawara, the head of the delegation for the program.

"We suffered a great loss that day," said Sugawara. "We lost 31 people and some are still missing. We received a lot of support from Japan, Okinawa, the self-defense forces, but most of all from the Marine Corps. I would like to express my deep gratitude for everything you have given us both back in Oshima and here

esl Beaton (right) talks to Sae Hatakeyama and Ami Komatsu, the tudents from Oshima Island her family hosted, at the pool party on amp Foster during the home-stay program, which took place Aug. 6-9. 月6-9日のホームステイプログラムの期間中に キャンプ・フォス **ノーで行われたプールパーティーで、大島から来た畠山紗枝ちゃん** ·小松愛実ちゃんに話しかけるリーゼル・ビートンさん。

Students from Oshima and their American counterparts play water tag at the pool party on

counterparts play water tag at the pool party on Camp Foster Aug. 8. 8月8日に行われたブール・イーティーで遊ぶ大島の子供たちと海兵隊ホストファミリーの子供たち。 Photos by Hiroko Tamakiファミリーの子供たち。 Photos by Hiroko Tamaki