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512th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, Del.

Japanese delegation thanks Team Dover for relief efforts

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436th AW Public Affairs

Approximately one year ago, inside the homes, schools and businesses of Japan's Miyagi Prefecture, the walls and furniture began to shake. A few hours later, more than 15,000 residents were left dead, more than 250,000 buildings lay in ruin, and three nuclear reactors spewed forth radiation into the atmosphere after the island nation suffered a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and major tsunami.

Immediately thereafter, the Department of Defense called on Dover Air Force Base, Del., to send more than 70,000 pounds of humanitarian relief supplies and a search and rescue team to the areas worst affected by the disaster in support of Operation Tomodachi.

On March 20, approximately 60 students and chaplains from the Japanese Delegation of Miyagi Prefecture visited their sister city of Dover, Del., to express their gratitude to the men and women who came to their aid. This year's tour marked the 15th anniversary of the visits, during which the student stay with American host families, further strengthening a bond that spans language barriers and borders.

The day began with a presentation that detailed the logistics of Operation Tomodachi and included Airmen who directly participated in the relief efforts. Among those who spoke to the Japanese students, was Lt. Col. Halsey Burks, director of operations with the 3rd Airlift Squadron, who oversaw much of Dover AFB's involvement in the relief efforts.

Fighting back tears, Burks said, "[the earthquake and tsunami] were terrible events; we were honored to help our friends in the Pacific."

Miki Smith, lead coordinator of the annual visits, echoed his remarks.



Members of the Japanese delegation from Miyagi Prefecture, Japan, and service members from Dover Air Force Base, Del., pose in front of a C-17 Globemaster III March 20, 2012. (U.S. Air Force photo by Roland Balik)

"It was a time of panic and fear when the tsunami hit; everyone was so appreciative when relief supplies started arriving," said Smith. "If there is one thing I want these students to remember following this visit, it is this: it is the American way to help one another."

The group went on to tour the 436th Aerial Port Squadron and a C-17 Globemaster III to see first-hand the origin of the relief supplies delivered to their home.

"Seeing these young people smile so freely after living through such a challenging time is heartwarming," Maj. Sean Kelley, C-5 Galaxy pilot with the 709th Airlift Squadron. "I'm honored to have been able to help these proud, resilient people."



Building your personal chimney: A lesson in resiliency

Col. Kelvin D. McElroy
512th Maintenance Group commander

Recently, while sitting in a class on resiliency, I listened to a facilitator use the four pillars of a building to demonstrate how to cope with life. I recalled how my father taught me at a young age in a similar manner. When I

would approach him with a situation that hadn't turned out as I had planned, he would say, 'Son there are two things you can't do in life: build a chimney from the top or drive a car from the rear.' As I matured and my problems began to mature as well, I finally understood what my father meant.

The real purpose of a chimney is to safely vent ash and gases from a house. It is important that a chimney be built correctly to prevent damage to the house. After learning how important a chimney is to a house with a fireplace, I now know exactly what my father was doing - teaching me how to be resilient.

The fireplace (heart) of your home (body) helps you steer the wheel on the road in your journey through life. You need a chimney so the smoke

(stressors) from the burning wood (life) can leave your home. You can't hire a professional to do this job for you. Here are some basic things to consider when building your personnel chimney:

- As when building an actual chimney, you must take a look at the big picture and plan accordingly. The chimney must appropriately fit your home. When building your personal chimney, keep the situation in perspective. Seek out the resources relative to the size of the situation you're going through.

- Just as an actual chimney requires the proper foundation and support, building your personal chimney will require you to build an established foundation. Your family, friends and your Air Force unit are extended all around you to provide that established foundation.

- The actual chimney structure must be built in a way that keeps it away from combustible materials on all sides. Remember when building your personal chimney, to do your best to stay away from negative thinking or actions, as those can also be considered combustible materials. Stay positive.

- Take care to properly outfit the chimney to your home to withstand rapid temperature fluctuations. To properly outfit your personal chimney, take necessary steps to take care of yourself - mentally, physically, spiritually and professionally. Exercise is a great stress reliever.

