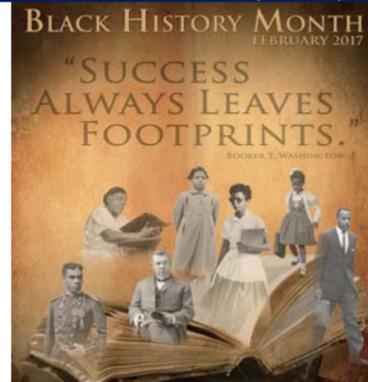




AMURAI GATE



Kadena teens join locals for mochi making exchange

By Airman 1st Class Corey Pettis

18th Wing Public Affairs

1/24/2017 — Kadena Teen Center Keystone Club members joined Okinawa City junior high school students to participate in a Let's Learn English, Mochitsuki ceremony, Jan. 21 at Koza Music Town, Okinawa.

The Let's Learn English program is organized by the Okinawa City Chamber of Commerce and Kadena Top 3 Okinawa Outreach to provide a culture and language exchange between Okinawan and American teenagers.

"We're building relationships with our neighbors right now," said Master Sgt. Devin Williams, 18th Equipment Maintenance Squadron section chief and Top 3 Okinawa Outreach committee lead. "Military members do a lot of volunteer work so now we are trying to get family members involved and build relationships between Kadena and local teenagers."

According to web-japan.org, Mochitsuki is a Japanese New

Year tradition of pounding rice to make mochi. One person uses a wooden mallet called a Kine to pound the rice in a stone bowl called a Usu. The other person wets and rolls the ball of mashed rice to get the desired consistency.

American teens learned about the tradition and paired up with their Okinawan counterparts to mash the rice down.

The mochi is then rolled into small balls for easy consumption and a wide variety of different toppings were available to try.

"It was a lot of fun," said Nao Kawamitsu, Higashi Junior High School student. "I got to teach my new American friend how to use chopsticks."

After the mochi was eaten and cleaned up, pieces of paper and paint brushes were handed out to each group.

The Okinawan teens taught the Americans about calligraphy and how to write their names in Japanese.

The Let's Learn English program is fairly new, as this is the third event. The first was a holiday potluck in December



(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Corey Pettis)

Members of the Kadena Teen Center and Okinawa City junior high school use a wooden mallet to pound rice to make mochi Jan.21, at Koza Music Town, Okinawa. The Let's Learn English exchange builds relationships between Okinawan and American teenagers.

and next month's event is already planned out, a sports day. "This is about teamwork and

friendships," said Williams. "We want to show we are more than just people who live inside

the gates as members of the military, we are neighbors and friends."



Senior Airman Dyllan Jones and Airman 1st Class Wesley Johnson, 67th Aircraft Maintenance Unit F-15 Eagle crew chiefs, maintain an F-15 Eagle Jan 10, at Kadena Air Base.

67TH AMIU CREW CHIEFS KEEP EAGLES FLYING

(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Omari Bernard)