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## CFAY Celebrates 247<sup>th</sup> Independence Day



Photos by James Kimber and Taylor Ardito, CFAY Public Affairs



# AROUND CFAY



## United in Tradition: CFAY's Independence Day Celebration

**Story by Garrett Cole, CFAY Public Affairs**  
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Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) goes all out every Independence Day to provide the community with the opportunity to commemorate this monumental occasion. It's a celebration of unity, community, and tradition. This year, CFAY ramped up its efforts to infuse a genuine American essence into the Independence Day festivities, making it an unforgettable event for the community.

"We aimed to bring the community all the aspects of what Independence Day represents and looks like in the states," shares Natasha McNair, the Special Events Coordinator for CFAY's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation department (MWR). This year, the event sought to create a wholesome, immersive experience that captures the true essence of American Independence Day celebrations.



talents were allowed to shine with an entertainment segment. The talent show gave community members the opportunity to showcase their skills and express themselves freely – a nod to one of the Fourth of July's core values: freedom of expression.

What would a celebration be without food and games? This year's event introduced food trucks to the lineup to recreate the charm of an American fair. Local vendors offered attendees a variety of American favorites, from burgers and fries to popcorn and even shaved ice, creating an authentic American culinary experience.

"Our carnival was also free this year," said McNair. "We had an amazing sponsor, USAA, and they assisted us with a significant portion of our expenses this year, which allowed us to provide the carnival free of charge without needing tickets."



The cornerstone event to kick off the festivities was a traditional bike parade, where participants could bring their patriotic spirit to life through vibrant decorations. Dozens of community members showed off their bikes, scooters, and even roller skates adorned with streamers and American flags.

As the bike parade concluded at the Red Brick area, local







Ensuring the safety and security of everyone during this grand celebration is always a top priority. Chief Master-at-Arms Jamal Borden, the physical security officer at CFAY, outlined the immense effort to plan and safeguard the event. "On the Fourth of July, my job is to ensure barrier plans for the parade are set up, personnel are vetted, and food truck vendors have proper credentials, while also implementing anti-terrorism protocols."

Behind the scenes, nearly 50 action officers encompassing security, transportation services, safety, and electricians, work tirelessly to ensure a seamless and safe experience. For both McNair and Borden, the efforts are a labor of love. They both find joy in organizing such large-scale events and witnessing the smiles on everyone's faces during the festivities. According to McNair and Borden, the event is more than just a celebration; it's a testament to the spirit of community and a tribute to the servicemen and women on the front lines who secure our freedom daily.



Without fireworks, no Independence Day celebration is complete, and CFAY did not disappoint. Just as the evening began to settle in, a small, unexpected rain shower descended upon the celebration right before the fireworks show was set to begin. Some attendees started worrying the much-anticipated spectacle could be canceled or postponed.

CFAY's team of dedicated professionals, undaunted by the weather conditions, worked swiftly to ensure the

fireworks show could go on as planned. Community spirit prevailed as umbrellas emerged from bags, and some attendees huddled under the Berkey field pavilions, their faces glowing with excitement and determination.

The darkened sky gradually transformed into a canvas of vibrant colors and sparkling lights. The resounding booms and crackles echoed through the air, filling everyone with awe and wonder. Each explosion in the rain filled sky was met with cheers and applause, a testament to the resilience and spirit of the community.



As the last burst of fireworks faded into the night, gratitude washed over the gathering. The rain shower became a symbol of the community's unwavering determination and dedication to celebrate their Independence Day. As the attendees began to disperse, community members carried the joy and pride of a truly unforgettable celebration.

CFAY hoped to provide the community with a genuine American Independence Day experience, where they could celebrate and feel at home even while overseas. In the end, everyone was reminded of the true spirit of Independence Day, that through the power of unity and collective perseverance, a community could overcome any obstacle, including mother nature's challenges.

