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Kubasaki High School

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INSIDE INFO





ARMY COMES UP BIG AT DRAGON BOAT **RACES IN NAHA** PAGE 3





With Mia Vedsted in the lead, the Dragon Battalion of Kubasaki High School captured the national JROTC title in Fredericksburg, Va. Photo courtesy of Marine Corps JROTC

Kubasaki JROTC drill team top in nation

BY DAVE ORNALIER STARS AND STRIPES Published: April 21, 2023

CAMP FOSTER - The drill team at Kubasaki High School has done something no other Dragon Battalion has done in 20 years - win the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps national drill championship.

"It was amazing," said Mia Vedsted, a Kubasaki senior and the Dragon Battalion cadet sergeant major. "We came

SEE TOP ON PAGE 2

















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TOP: 'We came in as an underdog'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in as the underdog. It was so great that we worked so hard, and we won

For the national title, Kubasaki beat out seven other U.S. high schools on April 12 in Fredericksburg, Va. That was after placing first in a regional competition against 60 other high schools, including other Defense Department schools in the Pacific, schools on Guam and in Hawaii and all the way to the Mississippi River.

"I wasn't expecting this," said Brent Cook, 55, a retired Marine sergeant major who has drilled the battalion since 2018.

Being part of the Dragon Battalion is a heavy burden, given the many activities and events that are requested throughout the year, said Kenneth Gipson, a retired Marine captain who leads the battalion.

Battalion cadets are busy themselves. Vedsted, for example, is also

a choir singer and participated in this **EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:** week's Department STARS STRIPES. tion Activity-Pacific Far East honors music festival.

Of the 18 cadets who traveled to Virginia, six play a spring interscholastic sport.

"We train around sports," Cook said. "We're practicing after sports practices end. These other schools train year-round. It's meet me at 5 p.m. in the gym to drill or come in on Saturday after track."



In Virginia, the Dragon Battalion achieved perfect scores in two categories - inspection and color guard - and took second in unarmed regulation and fourth in unarmed exhibition. Photo courtesy of Marine Corps JROTC

Thus, the Dragon cadets get pulled in all directions, Gipson said.

'The kids don't want to be locked into one thing. They want to be spread out," he said. The sports

coaches all want their people, "but we need them the whole year."

Marine units, base clubs and oth-

er organizations affiliated with Marine camps seek out the Dragon Battalion for drill performances and color guard. "We like to fill those requests whenever possible," Gipson said.

On top of that, the Dragon cadets immerse themselves in bake sales and car washes to raise money to travel to regional and national competitions.

And, of course, there's schoolwork. Gipson said they're not all 4.0 grade-point average students, "but they are motivated, and they stay on top of their work," he said.

To qualify for the competition, Cook and the Dragons had to submit videos of them doing unarmed regulation, unarmed exhibition, color guard and inspection and hope theirs topped the 60 other schools in Region 4, the west region.

"Their performance in every category, they blew everybody away," said Denis Carruth, a retired Marine lieutenant colonel and the Region 4 director.

In Virginia, the Dragon Battalion achieved perfect scores in two categories – inspection and color guard

- and took second in unarmed regulation and fourth in unarmed exhi-

Vedsted captured an individual honor, the unarmed regulation commander's final, edging out Ximena Cervantes of Brenham, Texas, 241

Vedsted is "the best commander in America," said Dragon Battalion cadet Maj. Ryder Beaudoin.

Overall, Kubasaki edged out Tomball Memorial, also from Texas, 3,922.4 to 3,809.6 for first place.

"So many emotions were happening" when Kubasaki was announced as the winner, Vedsted said. "I was sobbing. People were cheering.

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The Army Ladies' Dragon Boat Team edges past the Army "Black Knight" men's team to win the championship trophy.

big at Dragon Boat races

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN LAMAR, 10TH SUPPORT GROUP

> spectators, food vendors, announcers and blaring speakers, the roared chant of "One Boat, One Beat, Go Army!" could be heard clearly throughout the Shinko Wharf as the Army Ladies' Dragon Boat Team prepared to give it their all during the 49th Naha Hari Festival Dragon Boat Races on May 5th, 2023 in Naha City, Okinawa.

hrough the throngs of thousands of

As the three teams left standing for the finals made their way to the boats, the Army Ladies', The Army Black Knights and the Japanese Airlines, thousands of spectators pushed near the dock's edge to get a glimpse of the all-women team who had won hearts earlier by placing first out of 21 teams in the trial heats with a time of five minutes and five seconds for the 630-meter paddle. Before the sound of the starting gun, a mur-

of the gun echoed off the nearby metal container ships docked in the wharf, the three teams came alive with the rage of their adrenaline and motivation as their paddles churned and pushed the dark water below them past their

mured hush fell over the crowd in anticipa-

tion for a hard-fought race. As the sharp crack

The Ladies' team had been placed the farthest from the

dockside, which had worried some of the paddlers due to the additional winds and currents experienced farther out in the harbor. They began to fall behind the pack to the men's teams in the 315-meter dash to their turnaround point. The Army Black Knights team began to pull ahead.

During the turnaround, the Army Ladies' team expertly maneuvered their boat in an efficient tight turn, which made up all the ground they had lost in the race's first half. After the turn, all three teams were within a half boat's length of each other. It was anyone's race. While the Black Knights decided to muscle down on their strokes and drag their boat through the water with continued their cadence and

focused on their form. In the end, it seemed the men's strategy of brute force gave way to exhaustion while the Ladies' kicked their paddling into overdrive in the last 50 meters to pull ahead. As the Ladies' crossed the finish line at 5 minutes and 8 seconds, the Black Knights had fallen behind by an additional four seconds. The Japanese Airlines Team had fallen farther behind on the journey back to the finish line by more than a boat length.

When the announcer explained the results of the match through the loudspeaker system, the entire dock erupted in cheers and chants of "Ladies, Ladies, Ladies!" One spectator near the finish line cried out that they had just witnessed history in the making. This is the first time an all-female team has won first place in the individual timed heats and also the finals.

"This was the end result of a lot of hard work

and dedication. Discipline and

practicing even when no

one else was practicing

during bad weather, got us

here. It was the drive of every



est time today. The race was pure adrenaline, and we just kept paddling until the coach said to stop paddling. There was no time to be looking around. The focus was to just make sure the paddle was all the way in the water, and we were making every stroke

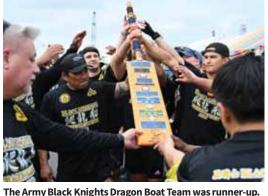
count. All of that work is ending in excitement and pure joy. That's when the tears of joy and pride started flowing for everyone," said Sgt. 1st Class Nina Blackmon, the equal opportunity advisor for Torii Station

Celebrations and revelry continued to span the entire wharf as the Army "Black Knights" men's team extended their hands in congratulations to the Ladies' team.

The Army Black Knights Dragon Boat Team won the 2nd place trophy. The team was comprised of U.S. Army affiliated personnel, as well as bilateral partners with the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. The Black Knights had the only truly bilateral team in the races. Second place was also viewed as a moral victory. Just a few weeks prior to the race, the Army "Black Knights" were scrambling to fill their boat with paddlers. After the team captains put out an Army Okinawa-wide call for support, members of the JSDF showed up in force to help fill the boat.

member on the team that helped us accomplish the fast-

"It was all worth it. My mind was just focused on the finish line. There was a team effort out there during our practices and the race. Racing with our bilateral partners was awesome. I am proud of our team. We were able to overcome language barriers and still managed to paddle in sync," said Maj. Brian Leung, the 10th Support Group supply officer in charge.







Village for my first try at something I had considered a bit of an extreme sport: ziplining.

All I was expecting was a few exhilarating rides from platformto-platform. My first try at this, however, turned out to be more challenging than that.

After signing in at the reception desk and getting fitted with a harness, I was guided to the foot of a launching pad for a safety brief. An instructor showed me how to use two kinds of hooks: carabiner and pulley.

A carabiner is a metal loop, one portion of which is spring-hinged to connect it to another hook or a wire. I had seen mountain climbers use this tool. The pulley, on the other hand, came with wheels, which was supposed to let me glide on a wire. There were two carabiners and one pulley attached to my harness. The carabiners are magnetized for safety reasons to prevent the hooks from being detached simultaneously from the wire.

After the safety brief, I climbed up to a launching pad to start my tour. For the first time, a sense of fear spread over me. Looking at the forest down below, I became aware of how high up I was. Still, the ocean, which shined in vibrant blue ahead and beyond, had a calming effect.

This adventure was supposed to take about 2.5 hours and since I had another appointment after, there was no time to procrastinate or delay any longer. I sprung off the foothold and my mind went blank. As I was gliding in the air, I couldn't feel anything but the tremendous speed. Before I could feel anything else, I was sliding on sawdust at the landing point. After this first portion, I was hooked and in search of the next zip-off point.

The Forest Adventure Onna's "Zip Trip Course" involves ziplines and suspended bridges to navigate. Though I had only anticipated the ziplines, the suspended bridges were an unexpected challenge.

One step onto the first suspended bridge and my body started to bounce on a wire as if I were on a mechanical bull, making it difficult to advance more than several feet at a time. The slow progress was opposite to the speedy ride on the zipline. As I struggled on the

eral suspended bridges with different features. Some were equipped with footsteps tied to the wire, while others required a walk on a wire less than 1-inch-thick.

The deeper I got in the course, the more challenging even the ladders leading up to the launching pads became. At first, it didn't seem like a big deal, but I was getting

tired and the climbs were becoming more daunting. More often than not I had to rest for several minutes before reaching a launch-

The last portion of the tour was called "Adventure Course," featuring a "Tarzan Swing." This swing meant I had to hold onto a rope and swing in the air in a pendulum movement to reach a climbing net on the opposite side. My sense of fear was renewed with this different challenge. I recalled some Spider-Man movie to simulate the move in my head. However, once I threw myself in the air, I was reaching the climbing net before I could summon any superhero power or courage.

This portion took a lot out of me and there were still a few more suspended bridges and one last zipline to go!

One of the remaining bridges involved gymnastic metal rings and my legs started to cramp. Luckily, there was another bridge with steady wooden footholds, which, I guess, the park installed to help those, like me, who were too tired to go for any more challenges.

After the last zipline ride, I was relieved to learn that I'd made it to the end of the course. All-in-all, this feat took me about 1.5 hours to complete. Although I struggled with suspended bridges and ladders, my racing mind toward zipline rides seemed to have quickened my pace.

After weeks of working from home, my lack of exercise and balance perhaps made me sweat more than necessary at the Forest Adventure Onna. However, I felt very much refreshed and alive in nature. It was totally worth my sore arms and legs.

Forest Adventure Onna

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.434081, E 127.760541 (parking lot)

HOURS: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Reception/sign-in between 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.) **TELL:** 090-4739-9140

WEBSITE: https://fa-onna.foret-aventure.jp/eng/

- *Reservation recommended. There is no cancellation fee. A visit without a reservation can put you behind a large group on the wait list and possibly make you miss a tour opportunity.
- * In case of inclement weather, the park can be closed.
- *Participants need to be 4'7" or taller, or a fourth grader in elementary school or older.
- *The maximum acceptable weight per person is 285lbs/130kg.
- *Junior high school students and under must be accompanied by supervising adult (18+).
- *One adult (18+) can supervise up to three children.













Enjoy beautiful views at Ishikawa Kogen Observatory

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

y day was already made after ziplining over the beautiful ocean and enjoying a tasty pizza with an amazing view, but this only took a few hours. So, I decided to swing by a couple of locations before going home.

My first stop in the afternoon was Ishikawa Kogen Tenbodai, an observatory that was just a 10-minute drive away from Cafe Gallery Doka Doka. Its neighboring area happens to be one of the narrowest sections of Okinawa's main island. There, the east and west coasts are only four kilometers away from each other. The observatory sits on Myouyama, a 201-meters-tall mountain. Thanks to these geographical characteristics, a visit to this observatory would reward me with a great panoramic view.

The route to this location may be a little complicated to explain. To put it the simplest way, you just need to head to Bios on the Hill, a nature-oriented theme park. But instead of going through its entrance gate, you will pass it and keep going a little further south. You will reach a parking space for the observatory on the right.

From the parking lot, I took the stairs to the top.

Surrounded by thick shrubs and trees, the stairs were literally cutting through a forest. Halfway through, there's an open space with a small bench with a roof to rest.

It was cloudy day and the air felt cool, so I didn't need to rest or cool off here. Still, I took a moment to try to catch the view through the thick greenery. I couldn't see much, but in between the leaves and trees I could see some of the coastline where I'd been only a few hours prior.

I continued my climb and after about 10 minutes, I reached the top. In the clearing, a concrete tower like a big mushroom was waiting for me. There was also a block of stone with the letters "三角点 (triangulation point)" nearby, indicating that this location is a standard for land surveys.

Taking another set of stairs, I reached a balcony that circles the mid-section of the tower. As I faced north, I could see the island form a triangle with the west and east coasts as two sides. It was a kind of view I had not experienced in Okinawa. There are mountains and hills that offer similar elevations to this one. For example, Ishikawadake (Mt. Ishikawa) is located to the north of the observatory has about the same height as Myouyama. However, being surrounded by other mountains, the view from its summit was not as panoramic as this one. Under the overcast sky, the island looked monolithic and timeless.

I wished the weather had been nicer. Still, I had a great time enjoying the view of Cape Zanpa, Ikei Island, and the Motobu peninsula appearing through a haze.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com











GPS COORDINATES: N 26.421494, E 127.788295

*Parking space available for free

the lookout for habu near Cape Maeda

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

n my way home, I decided to swing by Cape Maeda. Before the pandemic, this location was packed with many tourists who were there for snorkeling and diving. I was curious to see how this tourist spot would look in post-COVID days.

With COVID restrictions finally lifted, seeing many tourists there should not have been a surprise. Still, the sight of snorkelers and divers in their wetsuits walking around the cape took me back to the pre-pandemic days.

As I walked toward the tip of the cape, I was expecting to see more tourists swimming in the ocean. However, what I found was just four to five boats around the famous blue grotto. This was far from a "traffic jam" of boats and swimmers in the sea I saw five years ago.

I found that the gate leading to the shore entry point was closed. The closure could be one reason why the water was less crowded with snorkelers wanting to enjoy the blue grotto.

Just as I decided to head back to my car, a small, paved walkway caught my eye. This path led me through shrubbery and past a sign for something called

a summerhouse. Excited at the prospect of the beautiful ocean view the summerhouse might provide, I continued despite signs warning me to watch out for venomous habu snakes.

Though it was a cloudy day, it was warm enough for the snakes to come out of the shrubbery. A rodent crossed my path and made me think there might be a habu lurking somewhere to prey on it. I decided to carry on, although at a faster pace.

Soon I reached the summerhouse sitting on a small cliff protruding on the coastline. Or to be precise, it was just a picnic area with a small pavilion. From here the waves below were crashing and making a huge splash. In the distance, Cape Maeda looked like a small rock.

Had the weather been nicer, the summerhouse would've had a better view and maybe even a great sunset. Luckily, I made my way back down the path without spotting any snakes.

As the weather warms and summer approaches, the chance of encountering a habu snake will rise. The view from the summerhouse under the deep blue sky and the golden sunsets this spot promises, however, might just be worth another quick-paced, habu snakedodging walk in the shrubs.

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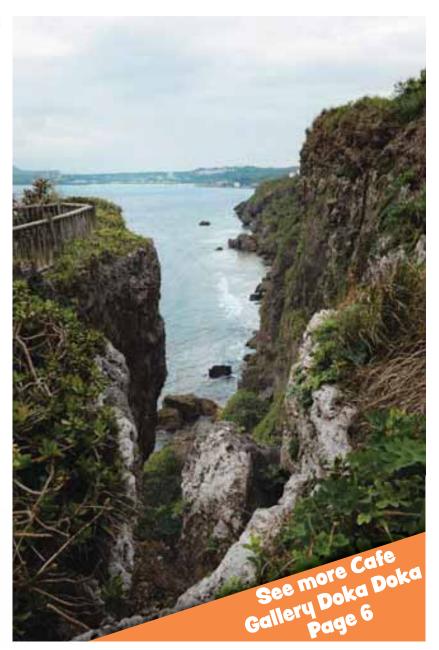
Cape Maeda

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.445117, E 127.771438

*parking space available (7 a.m. – 7 p.m., 100 yen per hour)

*Please refrain from parking your car on the road.

*Watch out for habu snakes. If you spot one, leave the scene carefully. Don't take chances! **WEBSITE:** http://www.maedamisaki.jp/en/



Okin Towa, touring the Structure pizzy tion. Towards and the structure pizzy tion.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

p on a hill overlooking the west coast in Onna Village, Café Gallery Doka Doka has created a space where delicious food and drinks pair well with the beautiful Yachimun Okinawan pottery on display.

There are plenty of similar café-galleries on Okinawa, but Doka Doka is one of the most popular among tourists.

I stopped in at Doka Doka after my trip to zipline at the Sheraton Okinawa Sunmarina Resort nearby. Many customers would go to Doka Doka for their handmade pizzas, and I was no excep-

The café has an early morning breakfast menu that ends at 10:15 a.m. During a recent visit, I was one of the first customers for their regular menu at 11 a.m. and nabbed a seat on the balcony overlooking the ocean. I had four pizzas to choose from including a four cheese, marinara, margherita and something called a Doka Doka original, which features salami, cheese, green pepper, and spicy sausage. The pizzas are 32 cm in diameter and will set

you back between 2,000 to 3,000 yen (about \$17-25).

After the thrill of soaring on a zipline that morning, I chose the marinara pizza as I thought garlic and tomato would be a perfect combo to rejuvenate myself. I was alone on that day and the 32 cm diameter sounded a little too much for one person. But just imagining the fruity taste of tomatoes and the distinct flavor of garlic made my mouth water. So, I placed the order without fighting my appetite. I also ordered a hot coffee (600 yen).

Cafe Gallery Doka Doka

a Village café

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.44585, E 127.80707 **HOURS:** 8 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. (morning, limited to 50 orders); 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (café, last order at 5 p.m.)

*Closed on Sun

e of Mediterranean

TEL: 098-965-1666

*You can also spend the night at Doka Doka and try a yachimun pottery-making class.

WEBSITE: https://dokadoka.jp/cafe/

I enjoyed the serene ocean view while I waited for my piping hot pizza. I had also fun looking at the various pottery by renowned artist and Doka Doka owner

Akira Tamada and other artisans' work on display.

When the pizza on a Yachimun pottery plate and coffee arrived at my table, my heart soared. Although the weather was cloudy on this day, the marinara pizza's vibrant red sauce and garlic scent were intoxicating.

The pizza was larger than I had anticipated, and I considered whether I might need a takeout box. After the first delicious bite, however, I didn't worry about it anymore and devoured it.

The thin, chewy crust was satisfying, and the toppings were a perfect combination to complete a delightful meal.

The tasty pizza and great ocean view transported me to a Mediterranean holiday, even if just for a short while. The only thing missing was a nice glass of beer, which I passed on since I was going to get back behind the wheel. I will be back for another holiday at Café Gallery Doka Doka very soon.

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Stripes Sports Trivia

SAY MY NAME! Given the name Panayotis when I was born, I am known by most as a shorter version of my middle name. I spent time as a defender in MLS, but many remember me (and my hair) from my days with the 1994 U.S. Men's National Team. Who am I?

Answer

Αίθχί Lαίαs

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DID YOU KNOW?

kinawans are thought to have adopted some words from the Philippines. One example is the verb "patai" which means "fall after being exhausted" in Okinawan dialect and "kill" in Tagalog. Likewise, some say that the word "gelem" or "ge-lemnu", which means "fool" in Okinawa, has its root in Tagalog.

Kanji of the week

contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must

Answer to Previous Sudoku: 9 4 8 1 5 7 2 3 6

6 7 3 9 8 2 4 5 1 1 2 5 3 4 6 7 9 8

3 1 6 5 7 4 8 2 9

2 5 4 8 6 9 1 7 3

5 6 9 4 2 1 3 8 7 7 8 1 6 3 5 9 4 2

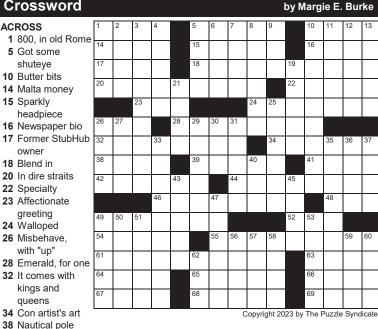


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45 "

3 Trial with a

4 River rat

sighting 6 Mona

46 High school grade 48 Swedish airline

49 Franc fraction

39 Now and again?

41 Cathedral

recess

flared

42 Salad follower

44 They may be

Crossword

de Triomphe 54 Flinch, say

55 Answers to problems

61 Musical ensembles

63 Jane's dog 64 Filly's father

65 Enraged 66 Soldier's stance.

with "at" 67 Meets, as a bet 68 10th U.S.

President 69 Whole bunch

DOWN

1 Legal title 2 Sugar serving dummy

5 Hollywood

7 Right on the map

8 White-collar worker?

9 Scot's cap 10 Patrol vehicle

11 Taken 12 Churchgoer's offering

13 Trusty horse 19 Laughable 21 Breakfast staple 25 Unassuming

26 Very top 27 Detective Charlie

29 Look up to 30 Kitten sound 31 "Goosebumps"

writer

33 Prepares to work out

35 Kind of church 36 Madonna's "La

Bonita"

of the 53 Reacts to veast D'Urbervilles" 56 Snoken aloud

57 Recently 40 Debate side 43 Privileged group deceased

does it!" 47 Room for church

garments

50 Otherworldly

51 Mother-of-pearl

49 Alex of James

Patterson novels

58 Computer operator 59 Cyrano's fam-

ous feature 60 Dinner in a pot

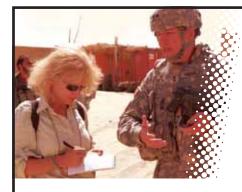
62 Take a load off

Answers to Previous Crossword:

| Р | 0 | Р | S | | Е | G | R | Ε | Т | | Α | L | Р | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | Κ | R | Α | | S | L | Α | Т | Е | | Н | Α | R | Р |
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| | | С | 0 | Α | Т | I | | Ν | Е | W | В | 0 | R | Ν |
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| Ν | Α | Р | | S | L | 0 | 0 | Ρ | | R | Ε | S | Ε | Т |
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| W | Е | L | L | S | | S | Е | R | U | М | | Ν | Ι | Р |
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| Α | L | Α | | R | U | R | Α | L | | Т | 1 | В | Ι | Α |
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| D | Е | Е | Р | | Т | R | Υ | S | Т | | S | 0 | Α | Р |

SUDOKU Edited by Margie E. Burke **HOW TO SOLVE:** 8 Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must

1 2 9 4 4 | 3 | 7 2 5 7 5 1 2 7 6 8 4 8 9 7 2 1 3 5 6 4 4 3 2 7 9 8 6 1 5 9







The #1 source of independent news and information serving the U.S. military community.





BY MATTHEW M. BURKE AND KEISHI KOJA, STARS AND STRIPES Published: March 30, 2023

CAMP FOSTER – Okinawa prefecture is expecting tourists and businesses to cooperate with limits on visitation to one of Japan's most popular destinations, the so-called "Galanages of the

called "Galapagos of the East."

Iriomote Island, an important ecological site in the Nansei chain, is suffering from its popularity, ac-

cording to an announcement Tuesday by the prefectural Department of Environmental Affairs.

"The purpose of this plan is to minimize the effects caused by the tourists on nature and the local community," the announcement states. "One of the effects on the local community was water supply problems."

Starting Saturday, the prefecture will impose a cap of 1,200 tourists per day – or 330,000 annually - at the remote island, the prefecture's second largest landmass after the main island, Okinawa, according to the

statement on the department's website.

The department is promoting sustainable tourism in the southern island chain that stretches from Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, to within 70 miles of Taiwan.

The guidelines are not compulsory, but

people are expected to follow them, a Taketomi town spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. Taketomi has administrative control over the island.

Some government officials in Japan speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

The number of sites on the island open to guided tours and daily visitation will also be limited, according to the announcement.

Iriomote, a World Heritage site 120 miles east of Taiwan, is renowned for its untouched forest, stunning vistas and unique species. It hosted 290,000 visitors in 2019, the website said.

The island is approximately 10 miles

west of Ishigaki Island, in the heart of the Nansei chain, and is home to approximately 2,400 residents. Beaches of warm, silky sand; submerged mangrove forests; and jungle cascades create an alluring wilderness just a 50-minute flight from Naha, Okinawa.

Much of the 115-square-mile island is a national park that is home to a critically endangered wild cat called the Iriomote yamaneko, of which only about 100 are known to exist.

Plans to promote sustainable tourism on the island trace began in January 2020 after a series of tourism-related incidents, from water shortages and traffic accidents involving wildlife to habitat destruction, according to the department website. The decision this week invoked Japan's Ecotourism Promotion Act.

Under the new guidelines, only 20 sites on the island will be accessible to tourists, according to the department. Only 200

people per day may visit the Hinai River, 100 the Sangara River, 30 at Mount Komi and Mount Tedou and 50 at the head of the Urauchi River.

Prefectural officials used a local ordinance to set policy on local guides, which are now required to access sites on the island, the announcement states. The number of visitors per guided tour is also restricted.

The plan brings policy in line with United Nations requirements for World Heritage sites, a designation the island received in July 2021, according to the announcement.

Iriomote tourism peaked in 2007 when 406,000 people visited the island, according to the department. Over the past decade, an average of 330,000 people have visited annually.

burke.matt@stripes.com Twitter: @MatthewMBurke1 koja.keishi@stripes.com Twitter: @KeishiRKoja



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in our school and community. Our experiences and wisdom have impacted our peers and been a force for change. With every individual's story has come new knowledge shared, and lessons learned by our senior class. Living overseas can often feel isolating, but truly our military community is something that connects us all, especially living thousands of miles from loved ones."

-Emma Leggio, Kubasaki High School Senior Class President

CLASSOF 2023

Kadena High School Kubasaki High School



Acker-Law, Jacob Aguon, Aiden Alston, Jabron Anderson, Ken Andre, Colin Asato, Nathan Barahona Walker, Annalyn Basa, Maria Guinevere Bosch, Isabella Botes, Jolyn Boucher, Sydney Brown, Tamira Castillo, Brianna Challinor, Eamon Chang, Suh Yeon Chapman, Gavin Charlebois, Katelynn Chavez, Anthony Christian, Oriana Chua Marquez, Luke Clay, Alaysha Cruz-Damian, Neveyah Davis, Evan Davis, Kaylin De Jesus, Renee Gabrielle Delaney, Lucia Dolan, Lindsay Dougherty, Cibelle Espitia, Christian

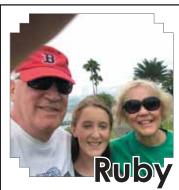
Farris, Dominic

Fekken, Audrey Fife, Megan Fili, Maui Flores Cruz, Jessica Flores, Vayda Foster, Kadence Francis, Naomi Garcia, Sophia Gardner, Baylie Gardner, Tiella Garza, Mia Gramza, Regan Gutierrez, Carl Hall, Jada Henderson, Avery Hipp, Ethan Hogan, Mikayla Howell, Karah Howell, Keelyn Hunt, Erik Hunt, Sara Ibanez, Leanna Angelica Iglesias, Bethany Brianne Infante-Castillo, Nevaeh Jackson, Keith Jeanblanc, Nicholas Jessup-May, Theophilus Johnson, Carter Johnson, Karise Kelley, Charles

Kelly, Aidan Knobloch, Celina Knobloch, Gina Laird, Jason Lavieri, Sean Lessmiller, Alexandra Levi, Ayanna Love, Destiny Lowery, Felicia Lowery, Jarrett Lucero, Eric Malinao, Chloe Marczak, Darbey Marostica, Raeya Martin, Juna Martinez, Gabriel McCoin, David McCollom, Cara McCollum, Reilly McCracken, Saya Melchi, Riley Mercado Matos, Anielis Miura, Yudi Money, Gabrielle Moran, Mihaila Mosley, Kira Nededog, Angel Nelson, McKenna Nguyen, Minh Obsuna, Maria

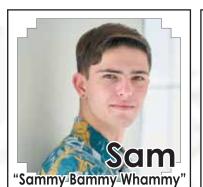
Packnett, Ryusei Padgett, Angelina Park, Brian Pena, Zachary Powers, Hikari Ramirez, Sofia Rary, Emma Ray, Noah Rendon, Alyssa Reyes, Makalah Rice, Cathy Robertson, Lucas Rodriguez, Riki Roen, Samuel Ronquillo, Abigail Ryan, Christine Salgado, Anabel Santiago, Derick Sawyer, Aiden Sayer, Evan Shaw, Madison Shepard-Savage, Teiya Smith, Baylee Smith, Danielle Smith, Genevieve Smith, Jaylen Sprague, Jeremiah St. Laurent, Akira Stanley, Iain Steadham, Charles

Stephens, Elijah Stephens, Isaiah Stroud, Alexander Taormina, Alyssa Taylor, Esteban Taylor, Jace Taylor, Nolan Tewes, Hannah Thomas, Treyvin Jace Thompson, Ayumi Tracy, Mary Trowbridge, Caroline Vesely, Ruby Vickers, Javontay Visico, Angelo Wadolowski, Jack Washington, Jasmine Weybright, Connor Wiggington, Aadan Wiggins, Nylah Windle, Cody Winn, Jeshua Wobse, Kellen Woolen, Isabella You, Eric Young, James Zepeda, Adrian



Carpe Diem! Dream the dream, and always have the courage to follow your dreams. We love you! Congratulations!

- Nanna & GrandStan



We love you and are so proud of you! We are always

here for you, cheering you on!

— Mom, Dad, Katherine, Ben, and Teddy



May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. (Psalm 20:4)

—Dad, Mom and Jahdai



We are so proud of you for your hard work and dedication! We love you!

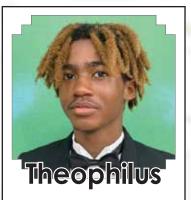
— Mom and Dad



Congratulations, son! Your hard work and determination have paid off. We are immensely proud of you.

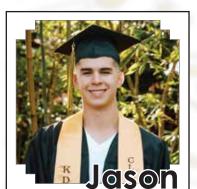
- Mom & Dad

STRIPES OKINAWA 3



Amatí. We love you! Usíogope, Mungu yu pamoja nawe.

- Mom, Dad, T2 & T3



Congratulations on this huge milestone! Good luck in Annapolis!

> — Love, Mom, Dad & Alivia

We could not have done it without you!

The Class of 2023 has experienced many difficult transitions, from the pandemic, to online school, and back again. Despite this, we have accomplished many great things. Some of our biggest accomplishments this year are our bond as a class through events such as Senior Sunrise, Secret Santa, Prom, and Torii Beach Day. Starting the year with fewer restrictions was a weight off of our shoulders, which allowed us to reignite senior traditions and lead the way to a more involved school. However, we could not have done it without the support of our community.

We would like to express our appreciation to everyone for helping us have a connected school year after the hardships COVID presented. We would also like to thank our massive community of loved ones, Kadena High School administration, and the DODEA family. Thank you, parents, who have trusted us in providing opportunities for your children; teachers who have invested in our education and future; staff, for your support in helping motivate us to strive for the best years in high school we could have ever wished for.

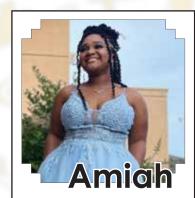
The administration at Kadena High School has gone through big changes, and we could not be more grateful for the arrival of our principal, Mr. Maxey, and vice principal, Dr. Bleeker. Mr. Maxey, you arrived at our school full of ideas and encouraging words to say. We are grateful to all those who aided us in beautifying the school, such as painting our parking lot or adding beautiful murals to our school. Your leadership has enabled us to accomplish many of our goals for the Class of 2023.

An incredibly special thank you to our amazing senior sponsors, Mrs. Faltz Stanley, Mrs. George, and Mrs. Ringgold for always showing us their support. Mrs. Faltz Stanley has been so helpful in guiding us through the year. We are so thankful to have someone so experienced to lean on. She has been nothing but supportive and validating of all of our ideas. Not only is she an astonishing teacher, but a dedicated senior mother, and an unbelievably great mentor. Mrs. George and Mrs. Ringgold a big thank you for keeping us reassured and the atmosphere positive, all the while acting as a foundation for us in our wildest ideas.

A much obliged thank you to Ms. Kisela. Words can not express the appreciation we have for you, for doing the most minute task to continuing to work with us even though you changed jobs. We also want to acknowledge our Mama-sans for keeping our school clean and us safe. You are not thanked enough and you deserve all the thanks. Additionally, thank you, counselors, to ensure we graduate.

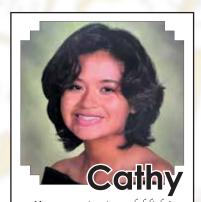
Lastly, congratulations Seniors for persevering, growing, and inspiring others. Because of our involvement in the community, we have grown together as we struggled, made mistakes, and succeeded. We should be incredibly proud of all our accomplishments, and how much we have grown and learned.

-Kadena High School Class of 2023 Officers, Bella Bosch, Darbey Marczak, Jessica Flores Cruz, \Luke Chua Marquez, Jasmine Washington, Ayanna Levi



Congratulations, Amiah Cunningham! We are so proud of you! Best of Luck on your endeavors at Stephen F. Austin University. We love you!

- Mom, Dad and Family



You amaze, inspire and delight! You're extraordinary! Reach for the stars! Jeremiah 29:11 We're so PROUD of you! Love Always,

– Mom, Eric, and Grandpa





Senior Karise Johnson runs the final leg of the 4X800 relay during a meet on the Kadena track.



Kadena Hi







Anthony Chavez runs toward the end zone during a game against Kinnick High School.



Nathan Asato runs for a forehand during a tennis match against Kubasaki.



Kadena Seniors are



AJ Millette (middle) with his teammates on the field for a game against



Daniel Velasquez in the butterfly during a meet on the swim.



Armand Padilla, Connor Martin and Jacob Ne Ville hanging out during one of the JROTC BBQ's held biannually at Kubi.



Kubasaki F



Kubasaki Senior Class enters the year's first pep rally for homecon

gh School



Jace Taylor, Alex Stroud, Even Sayer, Jeremiah Sprague, Kellen Wobse, and, Lain Stanley flex after competing in the Power Lifting Competition, which was held for the first time at KDHS this year.



Sam Roen and Gabriel Martinez strike the iconic "Titanic" pose during the senior field trip to Torii Beach.

Megan Fife (Belle) and Lindsay Dolan (Lumiere) and Genevieve Smith (Cogsworth) perform in the POPS production of Beauty and the Beast.



Mary Tracy, Christine Ryan, Jason Laird, and Lindsay Dolan give out free books during National Honor Society's Read Across



all smiles.



ning in their traditional Walk of Honor.



A group of seniors and government teacher Steve Larson A group or seniors and government teacher Steve Larson show off their creativity during Homecoming Spirit Week.

Isaac Venegas, Justin Murray and Jacob Lewis get ready for tug of



Ryder Beaudoin dresses up for Minion Day during Spirit Week.



Allyson Sizemore and Caroline Law take a break after announcing student council business to the classes .



Godfrey Wray with his father Coach Wray during Senior Night as Jaxon Mullen (77) looks on.



Kubasaki High School

Acosta, Jacob Adams, Nicholas Agee, Robert Aguilar, Johnathan Aguilera, Esperanza Alarcon, Amanda Anguiano, Sofia Aquino, Kirsten Auguste, Fushi Beaudoin, Ryder Bias, Donovan Bierman, Samuel Bradshaw, Destiny Bryant, Saarah Burrows, Marina Centamore, Angela Cernuto, Bailey Chandler, Megan

Clark, Bella Crisologo, Sir Amare Cruz, Alejandro Cruz, Carlos Eaton, Keara Espaillat Recinos, Raul Etterer, Aidan Etterer, Noah Flores, Melanie Foreman, Yuriko Fuller, Tajane Garbutt, Christopher Glover, Darian Gonzales, Christian Gonzalez, Oscar Gonzalez, Rogelio Gribbon, Kristina Anne Grubbs, Sophia

Holsapple, Alexus Hoover, Chloe Hughes, Alexander Ingram, Ryan Inzunza, Alonso Johnson, Kadence Johnson, Lance Jones, Nevaeh Krantz, Hailey Kraus, Casey Laborn, Aaron Laborn, Layla Larry, Aiden Law, Caroline Leggio, Emma Lewis, Jacob Lininger, Kristen Lockhart, Adria

Luczak, Gavin Mallari, Lance Axcel Mangio, Mark Martin, Connor Martinez, Gavino McShane, Natalie Millette, Allan Mullen, Jaxson Murray, Justin Nater, Efrain Ne Ville, Jacob Oldroyd, Dylan Padilla, Armand Palmer, Natalie Piner, Jacob Podzon, Justin Potter, Hayden Rancloes, Alahna

Recinos, Jesus Rios, Jacina Rodriguez, Manuel Roque, Lilyana Sabido, Jeric Sandoval, Andres Serna, Ava Silva, Joaquin Sizemore, Allyson Vanegas, Isaac Vedsted, Mia Velazquez, Daniel Voelkel, Nora Welte, Andrew Williamson, Robert Wray, Godfrey Yeaman, Jocelyn Young, Tairen



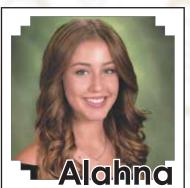
Congratulations AJ, we are so proud of you!

– Love, mom, dad & Angelina



Congratulations AJ, good luck with college and your career!

Love, Mimi and Miwa.



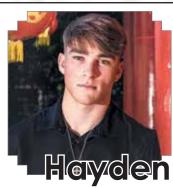
Enjoy every minute of what is ahead & always chase your dreams. All of our love and support,

-Mom, Dad, & Aubriana



Daniel, We are so proud and excited to see what the next chapter brings! God bless you!

— Love, Mom & Dad

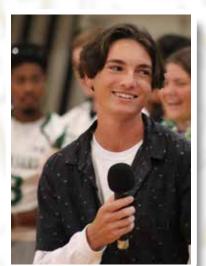


Congratulations! We are so proud of you and know that you will do great things at Arízona State University!

Love, Mom and Dad



Kirsten Aquino performing for Cheer.



Sam Bierman is all smiles

'No words could express our unending gratitude'

ubasaki's class of 2023 is many things. We are intelligent, brave, disciplined, athletic, diverse, unique, determined, and most importantly we are supported. This group of 89 seniors has been supported by countless individuals. Family, friends, teachers, admin, mentors, and coaches from all over the world have shaped this class into what they are today. No words could express our unending gratitude for the foundations on which we each stand. We have the privilege of graduating surrounded by genuine and caring educators that constantly strive to set their students up for success, whatever that success may be. Success to some may look like joining the military, going to college, or trade school, taking a gap year, going on a mission, getting a job, or starting a business. The beautiful truth about our class is that success takes many forms. The common thread that connects us all is passion. Whether we are competing in a sport or painting a mural, or playing in the school band, Kubasaki has been a place for us to foster passion. A drive to be a part of something bigger than ourselves in hopes that someday we will aspire to share our passion further and with more confidence.

Every student in this class has a unique and meaningful role in our school and community. Our experiences and wisdom have impacted our peers and been a force for change. With every individual's story has come new knowledge shared, and lessons learned by our senior class. Living overseas can often feel isolating but truly our military community is something that connects us all, especially living thousands of miles from loved ones. On this incredible Island of Okinawa, we are thankful for the amazing adults that aspire to provide us with the same opportunities as kids in the States, without ignoring the fact that we live in a unique and special situation. I have chosen to view our situation as a blessing.

We are a senior class that is unlike any other, incredibly driven and prepared for our next stages of life by many "villages". So to these "villages," we share our appreciation. We know that these journeys did not come without challenges and these stories without hardships. This is dedicated to anyone that had a part, big or small, in supporting Kubasaki's class of 2023. Thank you for seeing our potential and fostering passion within us, and thank you for being the foundation on which we all stand.

> -Kubasaki High School Senior Class President, Emma Leggio



Bert Agee waiting to play during the Kubifest



Mia Vedsted talks to the crowd during a performance of Kubasaki's



the school cheer off competition.



Donovan Bias, Esperanza Aguila, Amanda Alarcon, Isaac Venegas and Casey Kraus on the beach at Senior Sunrise on Torii Beach.



Undergraduate Majors

Art
Asian Studies
Communication Studies
Computer Science
(3+1 program)

Economics
General Studies
International Affairs
International Business Studies

Japanese Language
Political Science
Psychological Studies
Tourism & Hospitality Management



Admissions Counseling Office

1-14-29 Taishido, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 154-0004, Japan Email: ac@tuj.temple.edu Tel: +81-3-5441-9800 **www.tuj.ac.jp/ug**