



March 7, 2016

FRCSE 'chief chefs' prepare dinner at Ronald McDonald House



From left, Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate Kim Ha, Chief Aviation Support Equipment Technician Justo Valverde of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville and military family member Caitlin Flaherty prep food to make gumbo at the Ronald McDonald House in downtown Jacksonville Feb. 26. Members of the FRCSE Chief's Mess purchased the ingredients to prepare the nightly meal for children undergoing medical procedures at nearby hospitals and their families. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)

Jacksonville, Fla. – Sailors from the Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) Detachment Jacksonville Chief's Mess purchased, prepared and served dinner to residents at the Ronald McDonald House in downtown Jacksonville, Feb. 26.

The FRCSE Chief's Mess raised funds to purchase the ingredients to make a meal of gumbo, spaghetti and fruit salad for the families staying at the "home away from home" who have children undergoing medical procedures at nearby hospitals.

Several Sailors volunteered their time to prepare and cook the meal in the newly constructed Ronald McDonald House kitchen.

"We came up with the idea to volunteer here, so I researched it and contacted them to see how we could help," said Chief Aviation Support Equipment Technician Justo Valverde of FRCSE Detachment Jacksonville and volunteer coordinator for the FRCSE Chief's Mess. "After deciding what to make and determining how much food to buy, we went shopping



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and got a group to volunteer to cook the meal at the facility.”

The group of “chief chefs” spent several hours preparing chicken and sausage for gumbo, cutting up vegetables and fruit, cooking meat, boiling spaghetti and baking garlic bread to serve the residents.

“It has to be extremely difficult for these families to have sick children who have to go through medical treatments and be away from their homes,” said Master Chief Avionics Technician (AW/SW) Fred Flaherty who participated in the volunteer event. “For us to come here and provide this meal for them is just one small way to be able to help. I’ve volunteered at Ronald McDonald Houses at different locations where I’ve been stationed.

“It gives you a sense of pride and professionalism to volunteer in the community,” he added.

Ronald McDonald House employees enjoy having military members come pitch in, said Tonda Hoyton, Ronald McDonald House Family Services associate.

“They have been so supportive,” Hoyton said. “We’ve been doing a lot of construction lately expanding the house, so groups of Sailors have come to help move furniture and clean some of our areas. We really appreciate all that they do.”

Ronald McDonald House Development Director Carol Harrison agreed.

“I want to thank you so very much for coming here tonight and doing this for our families,” Harrison said. “It means so much to them to come back from the hospital and have a home-cooked meal. This is the heart of our house and our families bond when they share meals here.

“They are all going through similar circumstances with sick children so it helps to talk to others going through the same situation.”

The Ronald McDonald House, located on the Southbank of Jacksonville, features 30 bedrooms and is under renovation to increase the home to 54 rooms for families in need of housing while their children undergo medical procedures. Volunteers can assist with nightly meals, special events and other projects.



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Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate Elvis Lopez, left, and Chief Aviation Support Equipment Technician Justo Valverde of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville prepare chicken for a gumbo recipe during a community volunteer event Feb. 26 at the Ronald McDonald House in downtown Jacksonville. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate Kim Ha of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville stirs a pot of ground beef while making spaghetti for a group of families staying at the Ronald McDonald House Feb. 26. Ha and a group of chief petty officers from the FRCSE Chief's Mess volunteered to make the evening meal as part of a community relations event. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



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Chief Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AW) Robert Portell of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville chops parsley while preparing the evening meal at the Ronald McDonald House in downtown Jacksonville Feb. 26. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)



Master Chief Avionics Technician (AW/SW) Fred Flaherty of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville stirs a pot of his authentic chicken/sausage gumbo during a community relations event Feb. 26 at the Ronald McDonald House. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)