



Q&A *Gordon Ramsay* *Chief Community Support Branch*

JWC's Community Support Chief tells how his Branch is the excellent information and assistance point for the JWC staff, and their high-impact activities.

Community Support: A focus on “us”



What is the role of Community Support at the Joint Warfare Centre?

I see Community Support as having four prime roles: firstly, serving as an initial information point and source for those personnel and their families who are coming to JWC and Stavanger. I believe that our aim should be to provide current and useful information and assistance as best as we can. Secondly, I believe that we should serve as an assistance point for our community during their stay here. That goes from perhaps offering translation services for any letter, email or document that people

receive to actually calling local suppliers, agencies or shops to ensure mutual understanding or to address any concerns. I also feel that we should serve as a focal point for our multi-national community to get to know each other better. We do this by organizing and conducting our Information Day BBQs, community boat and bus trips and other outings, activities for our youth and overseeing our sports and recreation clubs. Lastly, I feel that we also serve as a conduit for our community to become engaged with other expats and our host Norwegian community. Information sharing is

vital and the more that we know about the fantastic opportunities available to us, the more we will enjoy our stay, make lasting relationships and look back at our time here as pleasant and memorable.

What type of community activities do you organize and why?

We attempt to organize what we call “high impact” activities. That means that we plan and conduct events in which we can expect high numbers of folks to participate with their families. Hence our focus on bus and boat trips, visits to local attractions and our





JWC Ball 2011

Photos by MSgt Herbert Berger, DEU A, JED, JWC



Information Day BBQ. Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to do such things for what we expect could be relatively smaller groups or for specialty interest areas. The sole exception is in our youth events where we believe that this portion of our community should be able to get together a few times per year for activities aimed at their interests. We also look at introducing people to different things or areas. A trip to, say, Utstein Kloster, or, the ancient village of Landa could tweak folks' interest in the myriad of local history available to us to explore. Participating in local events such as a football match or the Julebyen in Egersund also allows us a glimpse of local culture. We also rely upon mechanisms such as our membership in the International Network of Norway (INN) and inviting exhibitors to our Information Day to expose our folks to local attractions or opportunities.

Where do the funds come from for these activities?

Almost all of the funds that we use for our Community Support programs, including the Library and funding grants to our sports and recreation clubs, come from the profits of the Central Cellar. That said, we have a close working relationship with 426 Services who do provide us some funding support and substantial assistance with equipment loan and facility usage. It is critical that, for the benefit of the Community, we work as a team with national elements, Norwegian military authorities and our partners in the local area to offer as many and as varied opportunities to our community as possible.

Where do the ideas come from?

Most of our ideas come from within the Community Support team. These are generally based upon our experiences or successes of the past and trying to enhance

them. We invite ideas from the community and frequently get suggestions from the Community Council. The Council consists of all Senior National Representatives (SNRs) and is the community's voice for morale and welfare issues. Lastly, our partners in the Rogaland area also make suggestions of things that may appeal to us, an example being our last boat trip to the island of Norda Hidle.

What about sports facilities?

We are very fortunate to have the Elixia membership program provided to us by our Host Nation Ministry of Defence. With these, we can take full advantage of all of the classes, programs, and facilities at any of the five Elixia centers in Rogaland. We also have access to local military facilities and sports fields such as at Madla Camp and Sola Flystasjon. Our on-post facilities are relatively spartan due to resource availability.

Do you have any closing remarks?

Only that I would fully encourage all community members to take full advantage of our facilities as well as opportunities in the area. Our Library is truly a hidden gem, our Host Nation Support Office has a wealth of local activity information and the Central Cellar directly gives back to our community. Participating in either International Network of Norway (INN) or Petroleum Wives Club (PWC)-Stavanger, for example, outings can broaden our experience here and nothing immerses you into your local community more than participating in local festivals or having your children play football or handball or join a riding club or scouting group. Bring us your thoughts or experiences on something that you tried so that we can share it with others. In the end, the more that you attempt, the more that you will learn about this fantastic part of Norway. †



NEED TO KNOW

Plans for 2012: Our highlight Community trip this year will be a visit to the **Kristiansand Zoo**, returning through Kvinsedal and Sirdal, from 26 to 28 May. We will also be taking our second annual trip by the ski boat to **Sauda** for a full day of skiing and boarding on Saturday, 3 March 2012. Our two large community boat trips are planned for early June and early September to **Sjernarøy** and **Lysebotn**, respectively. We will also have our youth bowling and reball events and possibly day fishing outings and trips to **Landa**, **Utstein Kloster** and the **Jaermuseet**. Our **Information Day and BBQ** is planned for Saturday, 11 August 2012!