

topic, entertaining and informative.

“Mrs. James didn’t just remind us of the contributions African Americans made to this country, she pointed out pieces of U.S. history where many white settlers in Pennsylvania fought with bordering states, demanding equality for all,” said RaShon Robinson, a traffic management specialist with the DDC. “She also confirmed for me that there is still a need for education about all ethnic backgrounds both in our personal and professional lives.”

Robinson also feels that Black History Month is about educating people that Africans were more than just former slaves.

“Black history also includes the time when our people were kings, queens, inventors, business owners and strong family members, not just captive Africans in America,” he said.

Kulu Mele ended the ceremony with several cultural dances including a traditional dance and a more modern, urban performance by two of the



Pieces of African art from the collection of DDC employee Leslie Whittaker were displayed as part of DDC’s celebration of Black History Month.

group’s younger members. The group’s performances are influenced by many cultures, including Guinea, Nigeria, Brazil, Haiti and Cuba.

Dolberry had worked with Kulu Mele several years ago, and knew they would impress those who attended the ceremony. The energy of the group’s performance elicited a standing ovation from the crowd at the end of the program.

“I knew that adding them to this program would expose our employees to a part of African culture that would inspire them and make them look forward to our next program,” he said.

The celebration also included displays of pieces of African art and items from the Negro League baseball teams. The displays helped illuminate both the struggles of Africans in America and the richness of their culture.

“Our goal in the Equal Employment Opportunity Office is to make all of our events as exciting as this one,” Dolberry said. “That will attract more people to the events and help us all to embrace our diversity.”

DDYJ forklift wranglers show expert skill at the rodeo

By Yeoman 3rd Class Neadd Smith, DDYJ

Forklift operators at the Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan, demonstrated their knowledge, skills, and abilities of forklift operation during a recent lift truck rodeo competition. The rodeo’s goal was to promote safe forklift operation, exhibit the proficiency of the forklift operators, and to have some fun while doing so.

The event was kicked off with opening remarks from DDYJ Commanding Officer Navy Cmdr. Will A. Clarke. Next, Rick Atchley, director of the motor vehicle support division and the organizer of the event, was awarded a commander’s coin. There were 25 participants



A DDYJ forklift operator works against the clock to place a ball on a traffic cone.

along with seven judges to observe the competitors’ performance in five different skilled events. The events tested all physical and mental attributes of the forklift operators.

In a practical demonstration of skills, drivers in the “Lift Truck Wrangle” were timed as they maneuvered a loaded forklift through a narrow pathway. Operators had a ball at the “Having a Ball” station where drivers tried to balance a suspended tennis ball on a traffic cone. “Shoot the Bull” called for good depth perception and careful operation as they had to pick up a basketball with their forks and drop it through a basketball hoop. The timing had to be right at the “Time to Check Your Gear” area where they pre-checked their equipment by memory as opposed to using a checklist, a requirement prior to operating any forklift.

Like any rodeo, there was plenty of food including hot dogs, chili dogs and frito pies prepared by the DDYJ Morale Entertainment Advisory Committee. “I saw our employees having quite a good time and learning techniques from each other they might not have had the chance to share,” said Atchley.

The competition boosted camaraderie among participants and spectators alike and encouraged forklift drivers to cultivate their skills and raise safety awareness in the workplace. It was a great time to recognize the hard work and dedication of the forklift operators. Afterwards, certificates were awarded to the top three cowboys in each event.