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BHR ARG/11th MEU Paints School in Timor-Leste

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MANATUTO, Timor-Leste -- Sailors and Marines from the Bonhomme Richard Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) teamed up to paint a local school in Manatuto, Timor-Leste during a community service project, Oct. 19-20.

The ARG/MEU team on board USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) is participating in Marine Exercise (MAREX) 2009, a multilateral exercise that promotes cooperation through civic action programs and training with the Timor-Leste and Australian militaries.

“Sailors and Marines working together to accomplish a common goal epitomizes one of the greatest things we do aside from defending freedom and democracy around the world,” said Chief Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (AW/SW) Johnson Lane, a volunteer. “I was very impressed with everyone's efforts and willingness to keep going.”

In addition to clearing an area of rocks and broken cinder blocks, service members painted the interior and exterior of two school buildings.

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“The community service project went well. We accomplished our objectives of painting the exterior and interior of two buildings that house six classrooms,” said Cmdr. John Shimotsu, Bonhomme Richard’s Command Chaplain and community service coordinator.

“People care the most about taking care of our future and our children are that future,” said Lane. “When we do a [community service] project to promote or facilitate taking care of their children it goes a long way with the local community.”

This two-day community service project was just one of the many ARG/MEU projects in the country. Personnel also visited two orphanages Oct. 17 in Dili, the nation’s capital city.

“These projects are important because they promote friendship and foster the spirit of generosity that is part of our Navy-Marine Corps heritage,” said Shimotsu.

The Bonhomme Richard ARG is transiting the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations and reports to the Commander, Amphibious Force 7th Fleet, Rear Adm. Richard Landolt, who is headquartered in Okinawa, Japan.

For more news on BHR ARG visit www.navy.mil and www.cpr7.navy.mil.