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Host Lions Club member Dan Bernskoetter shakes hands Wednesday with USS Harry S Truman crew members. Crew, counterclockwise from right, are LS3 Levi Boxley, of Cassville; GM2 Mercedes Kinney, of Kansas City; and Petty Officer 3rd Class Latreyveon Mitchell, of St. Louis. Inset: Capt. Nicholas Dienna, the ship's commander, and other crew members were guests of the Host Lions Club's Wednesday meeting at Hy-Vee.

USS Truman captain, crew stop in JC

By Jeff Haldiman

jhaldiman@newstribune.com

While there are many unknowns in today's world, the Navy's job is to "bring certainty to the uncertainty," the commander of one of the U.S. Navy's top aircraft carriers told a Jefferson City civic group Wednesday.

Speaking to the Host Lions Club meeting at Hy-Vee, Capt. Nicholas Dienna of the USS Harry S Truman said his ship and its crew can make a big impact.

Commissioned in 1998, the Truman is the eighth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy, named after the 33rd president. The ship's call sign is Lone Warrior, and she is currently homeported at Norfolk, Virginia.

The warship has led several strike forces, participating in Operation Joint Endeavor, Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Dienna, his wife and seven crew members have been in Missouri this week visiting with various groups. The ship returned to port Saturday after spending a month at sea doing training maneuvers in preparation for its next deployment.

He told the Lions the 98,000-ton vessel has a crew of 5,400 men and women and can travel at speeds as high as 30 knots, or about 35 mph.



"Before I took command of the Truman, I read the biography of the man, and I found out how his Midwest work ethic is so much like how we approach our jobs in the Navy," Dienna said. "We're very grateful for the wonderful support we have here in Missouri because it makes the burden of being away from family much more palatable."

The process of becoming the captain of an aircraft carrier begins by becoming

a trained fighter pilot. Dienna flew F-14 and F-18 fighters and then got into the command pipeline, which required him to become a certified nuclear operator and then a certified ship operator.

"A ship is not just a hunk of metal," he said. "We have two nuclear reactors, a pull-up airport and even a Starbucks. I don't have to stop for gas. We are equipped to go

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anywhere in the world."

Some of the Lions asked Dienna, a 31-year Navy veteran, how the youngest members of his crew deal with the pressures of working on a big ship.

"I know many have said that millennials are soft and don't have a good work ethic, but I can tell you the millennials we have on our ship are just as gritty and determined to get their jobs done right as the earlier generations were," he said. "I'll take a millennial any day."