JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (April 19, 2018) Cmdr. Mike Polito speaks at the change of charge for Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville on April 19, as retired Capt. Pete Nette, left, and Pastor Steve Brooke, second from left look on. Polito is an experienced Naval officer with 32 years of service both as an officer and as an enlisted Sailor. (U.S. Navy photo by Victor Pitts/Released)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Cmdr. Mike Polito, a native New Yorker, is returning to the East Coast after spending the majority of his 32-year Navy career in the Pacific Northwest.

Polito took charge of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Detachment Jacksonville on April 19.

“The butterflies in my stomach were going because I was taking over as officer in charge of a detachment on a base that I’d never been to and didn’t know anyone,” Polito said. “Since most of my career has been spent on the West Coast, it’s a completely new learning experience.”

Though he’s new to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, one thing not new to Polito is maintenance work.

Enlisting in 1985 and working his way up from a machinist’s mate aboard submarines, Polito earned his first of several college degrees and was commissioned as a Naval officer in 2001.

After several tours of duty with electronic attack squadrons, shore maintenance departments and aircraft carriers, Polito’s experience and education is broad. However, he retains the affable but business-oriented personality – along with the blue-collar work ethic and Long Island accent of his father.
“My father was an electrician, and we didn’t grow up with a lot of money in our pockets,” he said. “I had a rough upbringing, but I decided to join the Navy when I was 19 and loved it from day one.”

Perhaps because of his upbringing, Polito has a particular interest in his young Sailors. That concern is evident in his command philosophy of “Take care of your ship. Take care of your shipmates, and take care of yourselves.”

“Taking care of your ship,” he said, translates to taking care of your workspace and equipment. “Taking care of yourself” entails the physical training, appearance and job knowledge necessary for all members of the military.

But Polito said his greatest emphasis will be on his Sailors taking care of their shipmates.

“You have to make sure that you take care of the shipmate working next to you, that he has a good plan for the weekend and not going to go out and get in trouble over the weekend,” he said. “I’m trying to get that positive peer-to-peer pressure so our Sailors have a successful career.”

Through that approach, Polito’s goal is to improve upon the success of FRCSE Detachment Jacksonville.

“I’m coming into a great command, but there’s always room for improvement,” he said. “I want to show the Navy how we can save a lot of money by doing maintenance work right here at FRCSE.”