



Team Coast Guard Meets for Sea Partners, America's Waterway Watch Training

By Hugo Freudenthal, BC-MEE, Larry Holdridge, DVC-MP (acting), and Ron DeLaby, BC-MOI

New Orleans: The first combined Sea Partners/America's Waterway Watch Training Workshop for Auxiliarists, Active and Reserve Coast Guard Personnel, and USCG civilian employees drew 90 attendees to New Orleans earlier this summer for a three-day series of sessions organized by MCPO Linda Reid (for Sea Partners) and CPO Penny Collins (for Waterway Watch).

CDR Chris Olin, acting director of the Chief DIRAUX's office, opened the workshop by noting that, "Our mission is the protection of the world."

On Guard: Waterway Watch

Chief Collins presented the America's Waterway Watch (AWW) program in her opening remarks and in succeeding sessions of the workshop. AWW traces its origin to programs started in many Coast Guard Districts after the terrorist acts of 9/11.

District Commanders were concerned that coastal waterways, rivers, bridges, tunnels and ports might become targets and local outreach initiatives were begun to help the Coast Guard spot potentially threatening activities. G-MPP eventually combined the District initiatives into the national AWW program which utilizes members of the commercial and recreational boating industries, as well as the boating public, to help prevent terrorism and other illegal activities by recognizing and reporting suspicious activities.

The Chief showed an AWW training video for Coast Guard Reservists being produced for G-MPP under a Department of Defense grant. The Auxiliary, with private funding, has produced a similar video that is available through the national distribution center. Auxiliarist Dick Clinchy, Chief of the Education Department, said that several hundred thousand copies of a companion brochure and boat windshield stickers on Waterway Watch are also available. He reported that every new recreational boat manufactured in the United States would come from the factory with an WW sticker, thanks to a grant from the Nationwide Insurance Group.

Auxiliarist Larry Holdridge, Division Chief, Strategic Planning for the M Department, described how the Auxiliary's WW in Florida is partnering with the state's Citizen Corps program, which operates with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) oversight. The Corps supports several national volunteer programs, such as Neighborhood Watch and Larry described WW as "Neighborhood Watch on the water." FEMA will promote and advertise WW and place a "Join the Auxiliary" message on its web site, he said. After a period of testing in Florida, the partnership may be adopted as a national program.

CDR Armin Cate (MSO Miami) and Chief George Plotner presented Outreach Techniques for WW, such as public service announcements. Emphasizing that it is crucial to bring the WW message to people on the waterfront, Chief Plotner said, "We're going to win America, one person at a time." CDR Cate also discussed the history of terrorist organizations, and of 9/11 and noted that WW's role is to be a "pre-incident indicator."

Sea Partners Promotes Environmental Awareness

Master Chief Reid gave an overview of the Sea Partners program, an environmental outreach program focused on prevention and protection - now celebrating its 10th anniversary. A major Sea Partners goal is better compliance with environmental laws and regulations. Among the issues the program addresses are marine debris, small spills, sewage, boat maintenance, protection of endangered species, aquatic nuisance species and citizen reporting. But public awareness alone is not enough, Master Chief Reid said, "knowledge alone, without design and action, lacks power."

Some other highlights of the Sea Partners portions of the workshop included dynamic presentations by several veteran volunteer educators:

- San Franciscans Fay and Bob Graham reported on their mission to get youths to help keep plastics out of the water. Part of their message is to "Remember the three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle."

- Jennifer Sevin, who created the Officer Snook concept when she was a 17-year-old high school student, continues as a dedicated SP teacher, along with her mother, supplying many of the educational materials used in Officer Snook presentations. Although Officer Snook is probably best known through coloring books for children, the program includes activities for older youths, as well.

- Charlie Barr of the Ocean Conservancy discussed the Good Mate program, another outreach effort focused on reducing aquatic pollution and promoting safe boating.

Chief George Plotner (MSO Mobile) and Auxiliarist Joel Aberbach, DSO-MS D7, talked about building outreach programs as part of the effort to educate and activate the public. Joel said the Auxiliary is the best recruiting ground for WW and SP, and each Division should appoint a coordinator for these programs.

In other business:

LTJG Shaun Edwards talked about the National Response Center, which was established in 1974 under the Clean Water Act. The Coast Guard runs the center, which services reports of oil spills, radiological and biological incidents, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, railroad and transit incidents, and general aviation accidents. LTJG Marie Castillo, followed with an explanation of the Maritime Transportation Safety Act (MTSA), and CDR Kim Pickens talked about the Vessel Protection Zone.

PA1 Alan Haraf gave useful tips for conducting an interview with the press, and stressed the importance of developing media contacts by providing good stories.

Near the end of the workshop, awards were presented to CDR Cate and Master Chief Reid for their work on WW and SP.

In his closing remarks, CDR Cate said the Auxiliary is needed to cover what port security can't. And referring to the workshop participants, he said, "The members of this group are the pioneers of Homeland Security."