

THIRD QUARTER | 2025

# THE AUXILIARIST

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY



**Auxiliarist  
of the Year**



# THE AUXILIARIST

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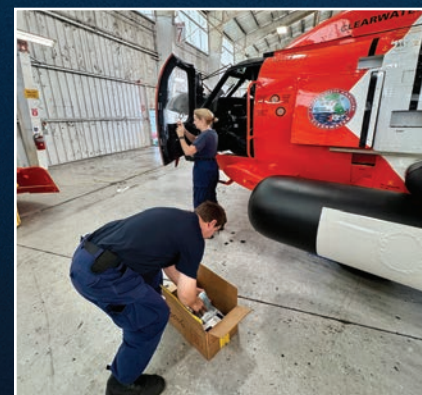
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Auxiliary Photos By Lisa Repetto

## U.S. COAST GUARD FORCE MULTIPLIERS

The Auxiliary supports the Coast Guard in its vital mission to safeguard lives and protect the environment across our nation's waterways. As America's Volunteer Guardians, we stand dedicated, vigilant, and always ready to serve on behalf of our fellow citizens.

# HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary—**nearly 20,000 strong**—is a unique volunteer force serving nearly every aspect of the maritime environment. Guided by the Coast Guard's motto, *Semper Paratus* ("Always Ready"), Auxiliarists stand prepared to meet a wide range of responsibilities.

The Auxiliary's mission is to enhance the safety and security of our citizens, ports, waterways, and coastal regions. Balancing Recreational Boating Safety and Coast Guard support with

Maritime Homeland Security, members also adapt to new challenges shaped by the post-9/11 era.

Since its founding in 1939, the Auxiliary has protected America's maritime interests across inland waters, ports, coastlines, and beyond. Volunteers from all walks of life bring their skills, training, and commitment as proud members of the uniformed volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard.

## RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY

The Auxiliary's leading mission is promoting Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) for the public. To support this, it offers a variety of programs, including one of its most recognized efforts—free Vessel Safety Checks for recreational boaters, a tradition that has remained a cornerstone of service for decades.

**PROUD TRADITIONS**  **WORTHY MISSIONS**

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## THE AUXILIARIST

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**Auxiliary National Article Submission Portal**

<https://tinyurl.com/AUX-NASP>



Auxiliarist Joey Feldman is shown providing photography support for Air Station Miami's External Affairs Department. Photo by U.S. Coast Guard



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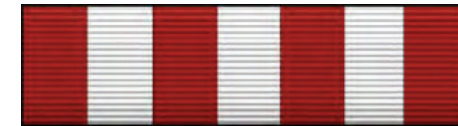
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# 2024 Auxiliarist of the Year

By M.D. Schlitt, AUXPA3

I have never met a more self-effacing and modest individual as 2024's Auxiliarist of the Year, Matthew (Matt) Thompson. For all his accomplishments as reported in the Citation (see below), he retains his "aw shucks" attitude and jokingly adds 'I got it because everyone else turned it down.' All kidding aside, Matt's accomplishments working for the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard, while maintaining a full-time job as a firefighter/paramedic, rightfully earned him the title of "Auxiliarist of the Year!"

I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Matt during this year's National Training Summit in Dallas, TX.

Matt was born and raised in Manistee, Mich., a small town (5-6,000 pop.), two hours north of Grand Rapids, Mich., where he grew up fishing with his father, brother, and grandfather on Lake Michigan. He has always had an interest in the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), as Manistee has been a location for a small boat station (SBS) since the 1870s (U.S. Lifesaving Service), and it is a major commercial and recreational port. The USCG has a constant presence there during the May-September boating season, maintaining Aids to Navigation (ATON) and responding to calls for assistance. While attending school, Matt had among his classmates, the children of the crew assigned to the Manistee SBS. In addition, during "Manistee National Forest Festival (July 4th), and

Port City Festival (September), the USCG would bring in other assets to his small town, including helicopters and cutters, which furthered Matt's interest in the USCG.

Matt's family has an extensive history since the Civil War (on both sides of the family tree as well as north/south), of serving in the military, particularly the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy. Accordingly, Matt has always had an interest in serving his country, and after graduating high school, he considered enlisting in the armed services.

However, Matt opted to attend Ferris State University, located in Big Rapids, Mich., where he majored in criminal justice. He graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Criminal Justice, with honors, and was also on the Dean's List.

While attending college, and subsequently, Matt worked for the Mecosta County Sheriff, (on a part-time basis), as an entry-level Marine Safety Officer, and he also worked as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in Grand Rapids, Mich.. From 2014-2018 Matt served as a Public Safety Officer at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Mich..



The crew of HH-60 6059, based in Traverse City, Michigan, poses with Matt and Auxiliarist Cara Templeton after completing a flyover and search and rescue demonstration at the National Cherry Festival in June 2025. Matt and Cara were on the flight to document the event and provide PA services. Photo by USCG AIRSTA ground crew.

In 2018, Matt decided to return "home" to West Michigan, where he worked as a paramedic for both the Rockford Ambulance Service as well as the Cannon Township, Michigan Fire Department (as a firefighter and EMT).

He is currently employed with the Cannon FD as a Firefighter/EMT and is an instructor for both.

Matt joined the Grand Valley Flotilla (095-31-07) of the Auxiliary in 2019. He cited his reasoning for joining as a way to use his knowledge and skills to help his community and his country, and as a possible avenue to becoming a member of the active-duty Coast Guard. His initial desire for involvement was in the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection (MSEP) program, but he found that there was minimal activity in the flotilla's area of responsibility (AOR). Matt then became a certified vessel examiner and public education instructor. He is currently working on his Telecommunications (TCO) certification.

Shortly thereafter, he was asked to assist the Public Affairs (PA) team, for the Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival, where he received positive feedback for his actions and especially his photographic contributions.

In fact, his work at that Festival received notice from USCG National Headquarters, and impressed with the quality of his photography, his work was subsequently added to the USCG National Archives.

Matt has since gone on to work more directly with the active-duty in the Great Lakes District (formerly District 9), especially with the famous "Christmas Tree Ship."



Matthew Thompson on board the USCGC Mackinaw prior to offloading 1,200 Christmas trees in Chicago during "Chicago's Christmas Ship" celebrations on 12/7/2024 (photo by USCG pool photographer).



**(Author's Note: The "Christmas Tree Ship" refers to the schooner Rouse Simmons. Before its tragic 1912 sinking in a storm that killed its entire crew and passengers, Captain Herman Schuenemann, known as "Captain Santa," would load the ship with thousands of trees and a large Christmas tree tied to its mainmast, eventually giving away trees to families unable to afford them. The ship's legend is a prominent part of Great Lakes maritime history.)**

In 2000, the Captain of the Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw revived the tradition of bringing cut trees to Chicago to give to the city's less advantaged. In 2021, Matt worked with Auxiliarist John Saran, AUXPA1, (now LTJG Saran,USCGR), on the project, and it was Saran who encouraged Matt to pursue a specialty in public affairs. In 2022, Matt completed AUX-12 C-School and earned his "candy cane ribbon" as an AUXPA3. In 2024, he earned his AUXPA2 and AUXPA1 certifications.

Since then, Matt has continued his PA support for the active-duty including: Working with USCG Station Grand Haven; USCG SFO Grand Haven, USCG Recruiting Office Chicago's recruitment fair in Grand Haven, and outreach for high school/college students (which resulted in over 150 leads) was the USCG's first large scale career fair in the area; Lead AUXPA and operational support for the 100th anniversary Grand Haven Festival; working in the Public Affairs Team and Joint Information Center for the 2024 Republican Convention in Milwaukee, Wisc.; Direct PA support to both Sector and Station Grand Haven; Direct PA support for both Air Stations Detroit and Traverse City; USCGC Mackinaw for the 2024 Christmas Ship; and with the Great Lakes District's and Chicago Marine

Far Left: Manistee, Mich. September 1994, Matt sitting in the cockpit of an HH-65A. The helicopter was open for tours during the Port City Festival.

Left: St. Ignace, Mich. August 1998. Matt (left) and his brother (right) standing outside of the bridge on the retired USCGC Maple (WLI 234). The ship was open for public tours as a museum. Maple was launched in April 1939 for the US Lighthouse Service and commissioned in June 1939—a little less than a month before the Lighthouse Service was absorbed into the USCG. Maple was the first ship to use the American portion of the St. Lawrence Seaway in July 1958 and hosted President Eisenhower on his tour of the seaway that same month. Maple was decommissioned in June 1973.



Safety Unit's "Operation Dry Water" and stopping the operation of illegal Uninspected Passenger Vessels (UPVs). Operation Dry Water PA support occurred in 2025.

As recently as February of this year, Matt was at Station Grand Haven when U.S. Representative Hilary Scholten (Michigan 3rd District), toured the facility, where he photographed the training evolutions and acted as the representative of the Auxiliary.

**"I'm deeply grateful for this recognition. But it really reflects the efforts of my entire flotilla, my mentors, and the Coast Guard members we serve alongside. None of this would be possible without them."**  
—Matt Thompson,  
2024 Auxiliarist of the Year



Above: USCGC Mackinaw WLBB 30—the cutter Matt serves aboard—home port is in Cheboygan, Michigan, on the Cheboygan River. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Right: Where it all began... Manistee, Mich., September, 1995—USCGC Biscayne Bay WTGB 104 in port for public tours. Matt's father, Alan (left), by brother Ethan (being held), and Matt. Matt was 7, Ethan was 3. Photo by Teresa Thompson.



For his extensive work with the active duty at Station Grand Haven, as described above, Matt has been authorized to wear the USCG "Boat Force Operations Insignia." (Awarded by BMCM Thomas, Officer in Charge (OIC), STA Grand Haven on 1/27/2025.)



Auxiliarists Matt Thompson (left) and Vicki Huffman (center) being sworn in by personnel from USCG ANT Muskegon as Flotilla Commander and Flotilla Vice Commander, respectively. December 2024. Auxiliary Photo by Brian Hartley.

As a member of Great Lakes District-Western Region, Matt holds the following positions: Flotilla Commander, Grand Valley Flotilla (31-7); Grand Haven Division (31) Staff Officer, Public Affairs (SO-PA); District Staff Officer, Public Affairs (DSO-PA); at the National level, he held the position Branch Chief for Communication Support; and as of this writing, he has been promoted to Division Chief, Communications.

He has also authored articles for: *MYCG*, *The Long Blue Line*, and *The Auxiliarist*.

Matt's family, which consists of his father (Alan); mother (Teresa); brother (Ethan); and his life partner for the past 14 years, Sarah Steinke, are extremely proud of all he has accomplished and his being selected for this great honor.

At just 37 years old, I personally have no doubt that Matt has a long and perhaps storied future in the Auxiliary, serving his country, serving his community, and saving lives! 🇺🇸

Top Right: Matt receiving award at National Training Summit.

Middle Right: Matt posing with life partner, Sarah Steinke. Coast Guard Auxiliary photos.

Bottom Right: Matt posing with Gracie, the family dog. Photo by Teresa Thompson.



U.S. Coast Guard sent this ALCOAST bulletin on 07/25/2025

## ALCOAST 329/25 - JUL 2025 2024 AUXILIARIST OF THE YEAR

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### SUBJ: 2024 AUXILIARIST OF THE YEAR

1. I am pleased to announce the selection of Auxiliarist Matthew Thompson of USCG Great Lakes District - Western Region, Flotilla 31-7 in Grand Valley, Michigan as the 2024 Auxiliarist of the Year.
2. Auxiliarist Thompson has proudly served in the Coast Guard Auxiliary since he enrolled in July 2019. In 2024, he demonstrated outstanding leadership as Vice Flotilla Commander by keeping fellow Auxiliarists engaged and mission-ready through creative training and mentorship. His dedication to recruitment and public outreach was a defining feature of his service, inspiring others and strengthening the Auxiliary's community presence.
3. Auxiliarist Thompson achieved the Auxiliary's highest Public Affairs Specialist qualification levels. He leveraged these credentials to actively support Coast Guard recruiting initiatives and serve as Auxiliary Public Affairs Officer for CGC MACKINAW (WLBB-30), Air Station Detroit, and Sector Field Office Grand Haven. He skillfully coordinated media coverage for high-profile events including the 100th Coast Guard Festival in Grand Haven, Michigan and the 2024 Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He authored the superb article "Hot Jobs" in the Spring 2024 edition of the Coast Guard retiree magazine, Long Blue Line, that attractively advertised the many opportunities available through Auxiliary service. He conducted valuable outreach missions that included visits to more than a dozen high schools, three community colleges, and one university which yielded more than 150 recruiting leads for Coast Guard recruiting offices.
4. Driven by his devotion to duty and commitment to serve others, Auxiliarist Thompson also provided vital emergency medical and preparedness training to Auxiliary boat crews and general membership. He led CPR certification sessions and "Stop the Bleed" courses that equipped Auxiliarists with essential skills to control traumatic bleeding, stabilize patients, and significantly enhance local Auxiliary readiness to respond to life-threatening emergencies.
5. I congratulate Auxiliarist Thompson's commitment to the Coast Guard Auxiliary and for his selection to receive this esteemed recognition. He will be formally recognized as the 2024 Auxiliarist of the Year at the Auxiliary National Training Summit in Dallas, Texas in August 2025.
6. I also commend Auxiliarists Sean McPhillamy of USCG Arctic District, Flotilla 2-15 in Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Alaska and Scott Ripley of USCG East District - Southern Region, Flotilla 63 in Poquoson, Virginia for their selection as honorable mentions and outstanding performance and achievements.
7. POC: LTJG Kelly Richters, COMDT (CG-BSX-1), at Kelly.M.Richters@uscg.mil.
8. RADM W. R. Arguin, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy (CG-5P), sends.
9. Internet release is authorized.



Steering Toward  
the Future:  
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
National Training Summit  
2025

Dallas, Texas  
August 18-23, 2025

by Rick Corrales, AUXPA1  
National Director,  
Public Affairs Directorate,  
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

A Week That Mattered

Dallas hosted the 2025 U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary National Training Summit (NTS), where nearly 1,000 Auxiliarists, Coast Guard leaders, and partners gathered under the theme “Steering to the Future.”

The summit combined strategy, training, and fellowship with a clear focus: aligning the Auxiliary with the Coast Guard’s *Force Design 2028* priorities.

The week balanced business with fellowship. Western-themed banquets and line dancing followed long days in classrooms and plenary sessions. The setting underscored a simple truth repeated often: training is about connection, and connection happens best in person. Members talked about the importance of finally sitting shoulder to shoulder, shaking hands, and discussing challenges over coffee instead of a screen. That sense of camaraderie is hard to replicate virtually.

The NTS also symbolized more than just training—it was a showcase of momentum. Auxiliarists arrived in Dallas with stories from their flotillas, divisions, and districts, eager to learn what national leadership was doing to prepare them for the future. By the end of the week, attendees left with renewed energy, updated skills, and a shared vision for where the organization is headed.



Opening Session, 2025 U.S. Coast Guard, National Training Summit, Dallas, TX. Photo by Coast Guard Auxiliary National Staff.

Setting the Table

The summit opened with the Committee of the Whole, a semi-formal session to review issues and recommendations before the National Board. Commodore Mary Kirkwood, the 37th national commodore, welcomed members in Dallas and those joining online. She noted that this event was more than just an administrative requirement—it was a forum for exchanging ideas and gauging opinions before decisions are made.

C-schools filled the agenda, covering training in navigation, operations, public affairs, and leadership. Specialized courses featured ICS-300, AUX-12, and AUXDATA II. Assistant National Commodore Todd Monis put it simply: “The National Training Summit was an incredible week, not only because of the fellowship and networking across our districts and directorates, but because of the extraordinary training opportunities packed into those seven days.”

Participants highlighted that the training was significant because it was delivered directly by national leadership; new instructors and public affairs specialists left with certifications, flotilla leaders gained valuable tools to take home, and vessel examiners returned with updated standards. These experiences showed the Auxiliary’s ability to become more professional while still being an all-volunteer service.



The summit reinforced its two main goals: to give members the skills they need now and to prepare them for future missions. It was clear from the start that the upcoming missions are arriving faster than expected.

Force Design 2028  
as the Backbone

*Force Design 2028* (FD28) was the core of the summit. Approved by Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem in June, the plan calls for the most extensive overhaul of the Coast Guard in decades.

A \$24.5 billion recapitalization law signed on July 4 guarantees that new cutters, aircraft, technology, and shore infrastructure will be added to the fleet. Rear Adm. Wayne Arguin, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy, urged Auxiliarists to adapt. He stated that contested logistics will shape the future. “You’re not going to be riding horseback along the beach,” he told attendees, “but you are going to be our eyes and ears across 95,000 miles of coastline.”

His remarks drew knowing nods from members who have served during hurricanes, floods, and oil spills. Auxiliarists are often the first to fill information gaps, conducting surveys, providing communication, or assisting in community response. *FD28* formalizes this role by calling for the expanded use of the Auxiliary in contested and stressful environments.

*FD28*’s People Campaign directly names the Auxiliary. The Coast Guard needs to recruit 15,000 more uniformed members by 2028. Auxiliarists are tasked with creating innovative ways to use private-sector experience to support recruitment efforts. In practical terms, this means Auxiliarists can help connect the Coast Guard with America’s communities—by speaking at schools, setting up booths at fairs, and sharing their stories on social media.



The Organization Campaign within *FD28* also influences the Auxiliary. The restructuring of mission support enterprises and the drive for innovation require Auxiliarists to align their training to match new Coast Guard standards. Members repeatedly stressed that this is not optional: as the Coast Guard becomes more agile and integrated with the Department of War, the Auxiliary must stay current.

For many, this was a wake-up call. “Force Design is not something happening to the active duty while we stay the same,” one Auxiliarist commented after Arguin’s session. “It’s happening to all of us, and we either get on board or we fall behind.”

Training as Readiness

Training was the heartbeat of the summit.

The updated AUX-12 course for public affairs specialists had already proven its effectiveness earlier in 2025 at Eastern District-Southern Region’s D-TRAIN. Eleven members completed the program, confirming the relevance of the curriculum.

In Dallas, leaders initiated the Train-the-Trainer program rollout. Fifteen of 16 available seats were filled. This guarantees that AUX-12 can be taught locally, increasing access without depending on national travel budgets. The significance of this decision cannot be overstated: by creating a group of trained instructors, the Auxiliary enhances its resilience, enabling training to continue even if national funding becomes limited.

Workshops also addressed social media strategy, AUXDATA II enhancements, and ICS leadership requirements. Leaders highlighted the importance of consistency: slides, branding, and messaging must be uniform nationwide. Members openly discussed the challenge of managing multiple platforms and emphasized the need to uphold national standards at the district level.

Beyond the classroom, training sessions offered Auxiliarists opportunities to test scenarios. Simulated emergencies allowed participants to practice communication under pressure, while tabletop exercises prepared them for leadership roles during real-world events. Every participant clearly understood that readiness is not an abstract concept—it’s a muscle that must be exercised.

Reinforcing international relationships, Philippines Coast Guard Auxiliary, National Director Faelnar and Coast Guard Auxiliary National Commodore Kirkwood get reacquainted over lunch. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.





## Voices of Leadership

The summit drew strong Coast Guard leadership, each offering clear guidance:



**Commodore Mary Kirkwood** reminded members that the Auxiliary's main mission is still recreational boating safety. She pointed out that although *Force Design 28* broadens responsibilities, boating safety remains "job one."



**Rear Adm. Wayne Arguin** stressed the significance of innovation in achieving results. He encouraged Auxiliarists to consider new approaches in conducting vessel exams, outreach, and education.



**Rear Adm. Douglas Schofield**, acting deputy commandant for operations, praised Auxiliarists for their dependability. "You help us stand the watch," he said, noting that volunteers expand the Coast Guard's reach across the nation's waterways.



**Capt. Brent Schmadeke**, Chief Director of Auxiliary, acknowledged staffing gaps but praised the resilience. He provided honest updates on the BSX office's workload, noting that while billets remain vacant, the dedication of Auxiliarists keeps the program running strong.

These leaders didn't just speak from podiums—they mingled in hallways, attended banquets, and participated in conversations that highlighted the close bond between the Auxiliary and active-duty service. Their presence sent a clear message: Auxiliarists are not on the sidelines. They are part of the team shaping the Coast Guard's future.



Members of the National Leadership Team take a break from their busy schedules at the 2025 Auxiliary National Training Summit to pose for a photo at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, Texas. Coast Guard Auxiliary Photo.

**Front row L to R:** Linda Merryman, Deputy National Commodore, Information Technology & Planning; Patrick Feighery, Vice National Commodore; Mary Kirkwood, National Commodore; Bruce Kelton, Assistant National Commodore, Chief Counsel.

**Second row L to R:** CAPT Brent Schmadeke, Chief Director of the Auxiliary; Michael Bozarth, Deputy National Commodore, Operations & Pacific Area; Alexander Malewski, Immediate Past National Commodore; John Krogmann, Deputy National Commodore, Recreational Boating Safety & Atlantic East; Sonny Thatch, Deputy National Commodore, Mission Support & Atlantic West.



## Mutual Assistance and the Coast Guard Museum

Support and heritage anchored the summit.

The **Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA)** booth was set up outside the main ballroom, offering a welcoming presence that highlighted the importance of support services within the Coast Guard family. Chief Executive Officer CDR Brooke Millard, USCG (ret.), CFO Melissa Bell, and volunteer outreach coordinator Valerie Stanley greeted attendees personally, explaining how CGMA provides financial relief during emergencies, education loans and scholarships for family members, and disaster assistance during crises. Brochures and personal stories helped put faces to the numbers, showing how members have been able to stay afloat through medical hardships, recover after natural disasters, or send children to college with CGMA's support. Dozens of Auxiliarists stopped by to ask about eligibility, many of whom remarked they hadn't realized CGMA programs extended to Auxiliary families in times of need. The conversations often became emotional, as



# DO YOU LOVE RBS?

## Earn the Recreational Boating Safety Device!

The Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Device Award recognizes extraordinary effort of Auxiliarists who consistently provide strong support to RBS programs. It requires significant activity in boating safety programs over a minimum period of two years.



Auxiliarists must earn 120 points for two consecutive years (240 in total) to earn the RBS Device Award. Points are awarded as follows:

### Vessel Examinations

1 point per paddlecraft exam  
1 point per vessel exam

### Paddlecraft Operations

1 point per patrol hour

### Program Visitation

1 point per visit

### Legislative Outreach

1 point per hour  
Federal Legislature  
State Legislatures  
State Boating Admins

### Public Education

1 point per hour as lead\*  
1/2 point per hour as aide\*

\*This includes AUXPAD Ashore instruction

### Public Affairs

1 point per hour  
External Print Media  
Broadcast Media  
Speeches/Talks  
Community Relations

[bdept.cgaux.org](http://bdept.cgaux.org) | [edepartment.cgaux.org](http://edepartment.cgaux.org) | [vdepartment.cgaux.org](http://vdepartment.cgaux.org)



Auxiliarists shared how reassuring it was to know such a lifeline exists, and leaders encouraged everyone to spread the word so more members learn about this vital resource.



Architect's rendering of the future National U.S. Coast Guard Museum currently under construction on the waterfront in downtown New London, Connecticut. New London has served as a homeport for Coast Guard cutters since 1791.

Inside, the **Coast Guard Museum** was represented by Capt. Wes Pulver USCG (ret.), who spoke passionately about the institution's mission to preserve and share the Service's legacy. He reminded members that safeguarding Coast Guard history is vital for shaping the future, emphasizing that every cutter, aircraft, and mission leaves behind lessons for future generations. Display tables featured artifacts, historic photos, and information about the museum's new initiatives, including expanded educational programs and plans for a modernized facility to better tell the Coast Guard story. Pulver highlighted that the Auxiliary has its own proud role within that story, from patrolling America's shores during World War II to supporting national emergencies today. Attendees were encouraged to see themselves not just as volunteers serving now, but as custodians of a legacy that will inspire future Coast Guard men and women.

Together, CGMA and the museum emphasized two truths: people need support, and service relies on its history. Auxiliarists left with a deeper understanding that they are beneficiaries of support systems and stewards of a proud tradition.

**Awards and Recognition**

Two major honors highlighted the summit's focus on emergency management and disaster response. Auxiliarist William H. Hanlon was awarded the Coast Guard Auxiliary Meritorious Service Medal for outstanding achievement as director of Emergency Management and Disaster Response from August 2022 to August 2025. Hanlon led the modernization of the Auxiliary Contingency Support Plan and the Virtual Incident Action Plan, boosting Incident Management Team staffing and readiness across 44 major units. He also recruited over 300 specialists into FEMA Geospatial Assessment Teams. His leadership was crucial during tornadoes in Kentucky and flooding in Texas and New Mexico, securing more than \$43,000 in federal disaster funding and enhancing national preparedness.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Geospatial Damage Assessment Team received two Coast Guard Meritorious Team Commendations, both with the Operational Distinguishing Device. The first citation recognized the team's service in May 2025 after severe storms and tornadoes in Kentucky, where they identified nearly 200 damaged structures, supported the expedited Major Disaster Declaration, and saved more than \$3,400 in federal expenses. The second award honored their work in July 2025 during flooding in Texas and New Mexico, when the team assessed 709 structures, saved over \$39,000 in federal expenses, and provided crucial data to support disaster declarations in both states.

These awards highlighted the Auxiliary's increasing role in national emergency management and showcased the technical expertise and dedication of its members.



Members from the Great Lakes District Western Region and DIRAUX Office pose for a photo after the National Commodore's Banquet. L to R: Ralph Kugel (Assistant Director of Auxiliary (Great Lakes District)), Michael Hudec, Matt Thompson, Jenn Austin, Anthony Marzano, Rob Kumpf, CDR John Sgarlata (Director of Auxiliary - Great Lakes District).

**Operational Training Review (OPCOM)**

Directorates presented updates on progress and challenges during the Operational Training Review (OPCOM).

- Recreational Boating Safety outreach tripled its social media reach during National Safe Boating Week, exceeding 100,000 contacts. Auxiliarists were present in all 219 West Marine stores, reaching over 540,000 boaters..
- Education leaders reported a decline in course graduates, even as new instructor development programs launched. They urged flotillas to reengage and encouraged leaders to prioritize public education.
- Vessel examinations exceeded goals, adding 284 new examiners this year. This achievement demonstrated that grassroots recruitment and mentoring are effective when properly supported.

The reports indicated that while *FD28* points to the future, the Auxiliary's core missions continue to serve as essential prevention tools.

**Fellowship, Culture, and Community**

The summit combined hard work with camaraderie. The western-themed banquet brought Texas flavor and line dancing. Members who had spent days in workshops celebrated together, strengthening bonds



International Guest Relations: Ladi Layeni, Jihwan Baek, Mohamed Lemine Greimiche of Mauritanian Association of Diving and Marine Rescue, Renato Sagues, Jose Caban. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

they will take back to their flotillas. Attendees called it "a release after a long week," a chance to laugh, share stories, and create memories.

Equally powerful was the remembrance of shipmates who had crossed the bar. Names were read aloud as the room stood in silence, honoring those who served. It served as a reminder that every Auxiliarist is part of a larger story—one that dates back to 1939 and continues today with every mission.

Training, fellowship, and remembrance blend into a culture that sustains the Auxiliary's strength.

**Looking Ahead**

The summit closed with clarity. *Force Design 2028* will keep shaping missions. Recruiting, contested logistics, and cyber challenges remain significant. But the Auxiliary's role is clear: continue training, lead in boating safety, and promote the Coast Guard story in every community.

"You've answered the call before, and you'll answer it again," Capt. Schmadeke said. "This is our moment to show we're ready."

For a week in Dallas, the Auxiliary demonstrated exactly that—being prepared, resilient, and focused on the future. 🦢



Behind the scenes at NTS 2025: Barry Denton, ANACO-FCd sits for his official portrait as Chris Ware, DCOS looks on. Robin Priestley, N-CMA national portraitist, carefully navigates his path back to the camera after adjusting Barry's uniform. Coast Guard Auxiliary photos.





From the Southeast District

# How the Coast Guard Auxiliary Makes Commercial Fishing Safer

By Lisa Repetto, Branch Assistant-Assistant Editor/Layout *The Auxiliarist* (BA-AMEA)

The Coast Guard Auxiliary's focus on boating safety is reflected through its emphasis on Vessel Safety Checks (VSCs). Many new members begin their Auxiliary careers by performing VSCs. The path to certification is relatively quick, and the rewards are significant. The goal of these checks is to ensure recreational boaters carry all the Coast Guard-approved safety equipment.

## What is a Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety (CFVS) Examiner?

In addition to examining recreational vessels, the Auxiliary also conducts safety examinations on commercial fishing and passenger vessels. Currently, there are fewer than 20 Coast Guard Auxiliary Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety (CFVS) Examiners in the Southeast District and about 70 throughout the Auxiliary. The training and certification process for CFVS Examiners is more rigorous. It requires knowledge of larger vessel operations, the roles of other agencies (such as the Coast Guard, NOAA, and FWC), and the fishing industry. Many commercial vessels sail 100+ miles offshore for extended periods, making it critical that each CFVS Examiner ensures these vessels have all required safety equipment on board and in working order.



Shrimp boat *Daddys Hands* docked at Tampa Shrimp Docks 8/27/25. Auxiliary Photo by Matt Copeland.

Matt Copeland with Captain Herb during the safety examination, aboard *Done Gone* 8/30/25. Auxiliary Photo by Lisa Repetto.

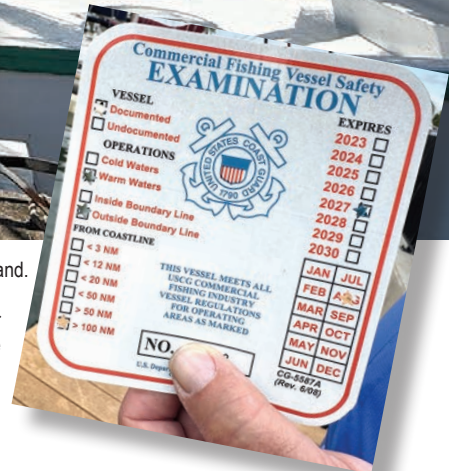
## Shrimp Boat Examinations —Tampa Shrimp Docks, August 27, 2025

On a humid summer morning in Tampa Bay, Matt Copeland, CFVS Examiner and Division 11 Commander, arrived at the Tampa Shrimp Docks. He was joined by Auxiliarist Kevin Wilcox, a CFVS Examiner from Division 8, and Coast Guard civilian employee Al Waterford. Together, they examined two shrimp boats—*Daddys Hands* (75 feet) and *Alma Jean* (67 feet). According to Matt, “*Daddys Hands* was intercepted by a Coast Guard cutter well offshore, and upon examination of the vessel, it was discovered that the vessel had not been kept up-to-date on its examinations. Several violations led to the vessel being ordered back to port and the Captain of the Port ordering a hold until the violations were corrected.” It was determined that *Daddys Hands* had not undergone a safety examination in over five years. Once the violations were corrected, the boat owner contacted the



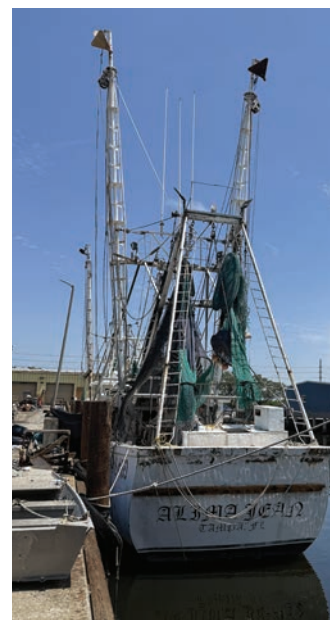
Background: Auxiliary photo by Matt Copeland.

Matt Copeland displays a safety decal prior to being affixed to the starboard wheelhouse window of *Done Gone* 8/30/25. Auxiliary Photo by Lisa Repetto.



Coast Guard prevention office to request a vessel examination. Matt, Kevin, and Al conducted a CFVS exam, verified the vessel's compliance, and the port hold was lifted. In some cases, vessel owners may also attempt to negotiate a reduction in imposed fines.

Following the inspection of *Daddys Hands*, the team then examined the *Alma Jean*, named by the owner in honor of his mother. The vessel successfully passed the safety exam.



Shrimp boat *Alma Jean* docked at Tampa Shrimp Docks 8/27/25. Auxiliary Photo by Matt Copeland.

## Fishing Boat Follow-up Verification Examination at Dunedin Marina—August 30, 2025

Matt had a CFVS re-examination scheduled for August 30 and invited me to meet him at Dunedin Marina to observe and photograph the process. The marina, located on the Intracoastal Waterway just north of Clearwater, consists mainly of recreational vessels. The 36-foot, all-wood cruiser *Done Gone* stood out for its uniqueness. Previously a sunset cruise vessel, the *Done Gone* now operates as a commercial fishing vessel, supplying fresh fish to local restaurants. The vessel is owned and operated by licensed Captain Herbert “Herb” Walls.



Matt Copeland and Captain Herb aboard *Done Gone* during the vessel safety re-examination 8/30/25. Auxiliary Photo by Lisa Repetto.

On August 27, Matt performed a safety examination on *Done Gone* and found several deficiencies. Vessel operators are always given the opportunity to correct any deficiencies and request a re-examination. On August 30, Matt returned to Dunedin Harbor, noting: “This was a return for the follow-up of the deficiencies in the exam that he had earlier in the week. I verified that the deficiencies were corrected, and now he’s good to sail.” Captain Herb was issued a decal, which Matt placed on the vessel’s starboard wheelhouse window.

Upon completion, Matt remarked, “We will see him again in two years.” Unlike *Daddys Hands*, which was boarded offshore by a Coast Guard cutter, *Done Gone* requested a safety exam because NOAA requires vessels to undergo bi-yearly checks. NOAA conducts examinations but does not issue decals. NOAA examiners also frequently board fishing vessels like *Done Gone* to observe, examine, and record catches. These observers help monitor fish stocks and guide fisheries management.

## Challenges in Compliance and Responsible Boating

As I learned, boating safety equipment problems are not limited to recreational vessels. Many commercial vessels also lack adequate and well-maintained safety equipment. Fortunately, the Coast Guard, NOAA, and other organizations are helping ensure a culture of safety among the “big boats.”

The Coast Guard can track fishing vessels larger than 65.5 feet using the Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponder, which is required by law. Some operators turn off their AIS to conceal fishing locations; however, NOAA tracks vessels via GPS, so either the Coast Guard or NOAA maintains oversight. The Coast Guard can also review inspection history through AIS data or by searching a vessel’s documentation or Florida ID number.

A vessel’s federal documentation number (Coast Guard Official Number) is a six- or seven-digit number that must be displayed on the hull or wheelhouse and marked permanently within the vessel. All vessels greater than five tons may be federally documented. In addition to the name, the hailing port must be marked on the hull, usually the stern. Vessels are designated as state-registered or federally documented, and as warm- or cold-water vessels. Cold-water vessels north of Savannah, Ga., require additional gear such as immersion suits.



Checking the inspection date of the hydrostatic release unit on inflatable life raft, *Done Gone* 8/27/25. Auxiliary Photo by Matt Copeland.



Inflatable life raft inspection record label, *Done Gone* 8/27/25. Auxiliary Photo by Matt Copeland.

The Coast Guard intercepts commercial fishing vessels for various reasons, including safety compliance, crew citizenship verification, and vessel condition. Because many vessels operate far offshore, failure to properly maintain safety equipment can have catastrophic consequences.

In addition to equipment checks, examiners review crew qualifications. Matt explained, "The captain must be a U.S. citizen (not naturalized) and no more than 25% of the crew may be non-U.S. citizens." Commercial safety examinations are required every five years but are recommended every two; decals expire after two years.

Many boat operators voluntarily seek examinations "every two years like clockwork," according to Matt, while other operators resist, to their detriment. Often, the cost of maintaining a working vessel can become challenging, and difficult choices are made. Matt added, "The sad part is, owners look at the profit line, and I've seen this in my years of doing the commercial fishing fleets. The owners are looking at the money coming in, not the money they have to put into their boats."

When not working his full-time job, Matt serves as Division 11 Commander. He also makes himself available to assist commercial operators needing CFVS examinations so they can safely return to fishing.

Matt conducts about 25 CFVS exams annually, covering the area from the Skyway Bridge north to the Big Bend. 🦋



Matt Copeland and Lisa Repetto pictured at the Dunedin Marina 8/30/25. Auxiliary Photo by Lisa Repetto.

Background: Auxiliary photo by Matt Copeland.

## UPON THE SEA

Upon the sea, a perilous tale  
Upon the sea, our heroes sail

Upon the sea, do perils lie  
Upon the sea, our heroes fly

Upon the sea, a ship's aground  
Upon the sea, our heroes pound

Upon the sea, a terrible sight  
Upon the sea, our heroes take flight

Upon the sea, though we may die  
Upon the sea, our heroes try

Upon the sea, we risk our lives  
Upon the sea, the Coast Guard thrives

by Mike Bronson



Southeast District  
Division 11 Staff  
Officer-Finance  
September 2025  
Photo: Lisa Repetto

Mike Bronson is a former Coast Guard active-duty member, serving from March 1, 1982, to October 31, 1989—a total of 7 years and 8 months. His duty stations included: Boot Camp, USCG TRACEN, Cape May N.J.; sea duty on the USCG Cutter *Jarvis* (WHEC 725) in Honolulu, HI; the USCG Academy Library in New London Conn.; Storekeeper Class "A" School in Petaluma Calif., and, last but not least, back to USCG TRACEN Cape May, where he served in the Comptroller's Office, then Purchasing, and finally, Recruit Training as an Assistant Company Commander.

Mike Bronson has been an Auxiliarist for seven years and four months and is currently a member of Clearwater Flotilla 11-1, Coast Guard Southeast District (formerly 7th District). He has served as the Clearwater Flotilla Staff Officer for Communications (FSO-CM), as well as the Rescue and Survival Systems Officer for Division 11, and was recently appointed as the Division 11 Staff Officer-Finance (SO-FN).



Assistant Company  
Commander SK2  
Mike Bronson 1986  
Photo: USCG



# 44 Years Strong: CGMA's Enduring Support for the Auxiliary

By Brooke Millard, CDR, USCG (Ret)  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Coast Guard Mutual Assistance

In August, at the National Training Summit in Dallas, Texas, I had the privilege of sharing information on how Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) supports individual Auxiliarists. I'd like to provide you with an update as well.

## Traditional and New Program Support for Auxiliarists

CGMA has over 20 programs available to members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary in need of a grant or interest-free loan to overcome a financial challenge. Since 1981, popular programs available to Auxiliarists have included disaster relief, food-replacement post-power outage, vehicle repair loans, medical and dental loans, as well as education loans. CGMA also provides grants and interest-free loans to help support Auxiliarists' pursuit of college, their desire to grow their family, to help their elderly family member obtain specialized equipment not covered by insurance, or to help pay for that expensive pet surgery.



I anticipate in January 2026, CGMA will expand those eligible for our current uniform program to include Auxiliarists. As you know, Auxiliary members volunteer their time and expertise but must purchase uniforms at personal expense to perform official duties. This initial investment may create a barrier to entry for volunteers who wish to support critical Coast Guard operations. We are currently budgeting a one-time uniform grant of \$250 for those Auxiliary personnel who are within their first year after receiving their Coast Guard Auxiliary member number. So new Auxiliarists: save that uniform receipt, which will need to be submitted, along with a letter from your respective Division Commander, that attests you're in good standing.

## How can Auxiliarists apply for support?

Auxiliarists can now apply for CGMA assistance directly via our online portal: <https://portal.mycgma.org/s/> Clients can also start with their local CGMA representative, whom they can identify via the "Find my Representative" link on our homepage <https://mycgma.org>. Or, they can call our office.

After the local representative has reviewed the completed application including necessary documentation, funds can be received within hours to a few days. The time it takes to process the application depends on both the amount

All photos provided by CGMA.



of funding requested, whether the ask is for a grant or an interest-free loan, and how the client prefers to receive funds (e.g.: electronic funds transfer or check).

**Note: all CGMA loans are interest-free and require no credit check. Repayment plans are catered to best support the member's financial situation.**

## A few things to know about CGMA

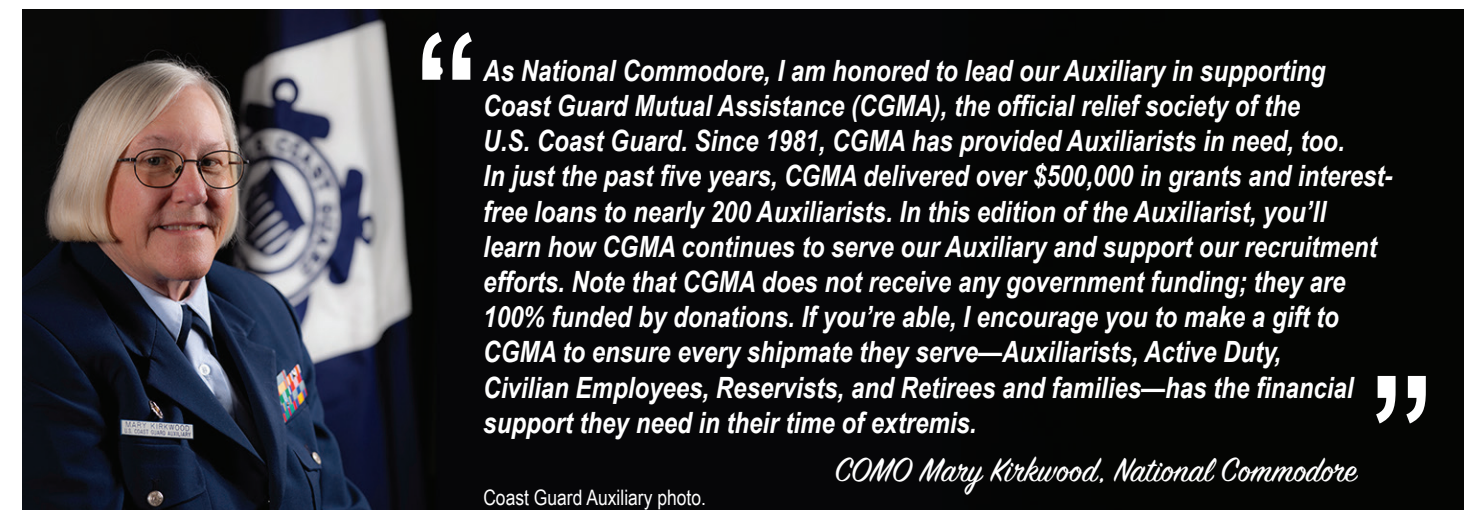
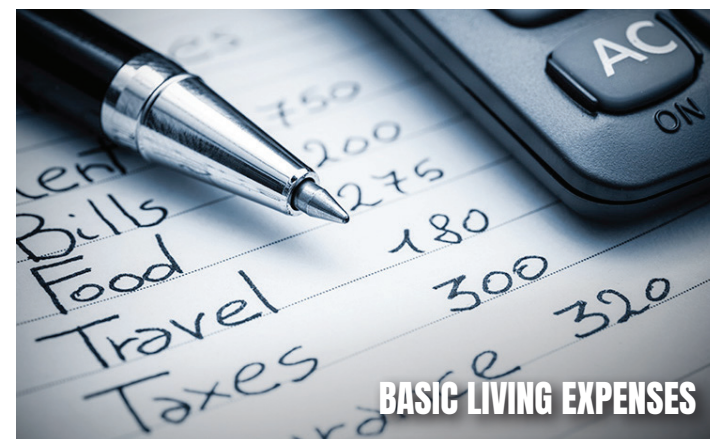
CGMA is the official relief society for the U.S. Coast Guard. In addition to Auxiliarists, we support Active Duty, Civilian Employees, Reservists, Retirees and families. Formed in 1924, CGMA has provided over \$250 million in support to this community. In 2024 alone, CGMA processed 6,000 cases, delivering \$2.9 million in grants and \$5.6 million in interest-free loans to those in need. The highest grant we provided in 2024 was \$24,000.

## CGMA is "By Coasties, For Coasties"

As CEO of a non-profit, I work for my Board of Directors and lead our amazing staff to execute the Board's vision. CGMA is unique in that our Board of Directors is 100% representative of those we serve. Commandant Admiral Kevin Lunday is our Board Chair. CGMA's Board President is RADM Zeita Merchant. MCPOCG Phil Waldron serves on the Board. We also have a 3-year rotational Auxiliarist representative. Auxiliarist Mike Phillips is the current incumbent and serves on the Executive Committee as well as the Finance Committee.

## CGMA tries to get to yes.

If you hear of a member in your command who needs financial assistance, contact CGMA, even if the situation might not fit neatly into a current program. You might not need to pass the hat or create a GoFundMe. Auxiliarists always can call or email CGMA directly with a question or to address a need.





**Consider CGMA a unique Auxiliary resource.** The expansion of the uniform program to include Auxiliarists began from a conversation I had earlier this year with Southeast Commodore Martin Goodwin as well as leaders of Division 15, Flotillas 84 and 81. Each mentioned the Auxiliary's goal to expand the force; CGMA wants to support your efforts! Perhaps prospective volunteers' knowledge of their access to CGMA benefits as an Auxiliarist will help recruiting efforts as well.

**CGMA is 100% funded by donations.** CGMA is a bona fide 501.c.3. We receive zero government funding. For nine years running we've earned all four stars on Charity Navigator. Our financials are transparent. Our process has integrity. And our impact is tremendous.

If you are one of the many Auxiliarists who support CGMA, thank you! We are grateful to our Auxiliarist donors, fund-raisers, Ambassadors, CGX Round-Uppers, and followers! Thank you for your tremendous support of our U.S. Coast Guard!



**PET EXPENSES**



**CGMA Direct Line: 703-875-0404**  
**Email: [CGMA@mycgma.org](mailto:CGMA@mycgma.org)**  
**Auxiliary Support:**  
[MyCGMA.Org/Get-Help/Auxiliary-Members](https://MyCGMA.Org/Get-Help/Auxiliary-Members)

The screenshot shows the CGMA website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: GET HELP, WAYS TO GIVE, ABOUT US, REPS' RESOURCES, and GET INVOLVED. The main heading is 'GET HELP' with a subtext: 'We aim to help you with everyday essentials, covering emergencies, housing, education, medical, and other financial needs during your times of need.' Below this is a button labeled 'DESCRIBE YOUR NEED' with a blue arrow pointing to it from the text '\*NEW\* AI Tool'. To the right is a large QR code. At the bottom, there are two columns of links: 'WHO WE HELP', 'AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE', 'FIND MY REPRESENTATIVE', 'HOW TO APPLY', 'GENERAL LOAN INFORMATION' on the left, and 'APPLICATION PROCESSING TIMELINE', 'HOW DO I PAY MY LOAN?', 'LOAN PAYMENT OPTIONS', 'HOW CAN I APPEAL?' on the right.

Helping 1 in 7 members of our Coast Guard community each year



**That's the Power of CGMA**



For more than 100 years, Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) has provided aid to members of the U.S. Coast Guard community. Whether it's disaster relief, rental assistance, uniform replacement or education support, we unite as one to serve many. Since we're 100% funded by donations, your support is critical to helping our members in need.

**WE RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE COAST GUARD COMMUNITY IN THREE KEY AREAS**



**DISASTER AND EMERGENCY RELIEF**

Rapid assistance for evacuation and urgent aid for repairs brings safety, stability and hope



**EDUCATION ASSISTANCE**

Education grants and loans to foster academic pursuits and goals



**DAY-TO-DAY SUPPORT**

Grants and loans to support PCS moves, special needs and adoption, unexpected car or home repairs and more



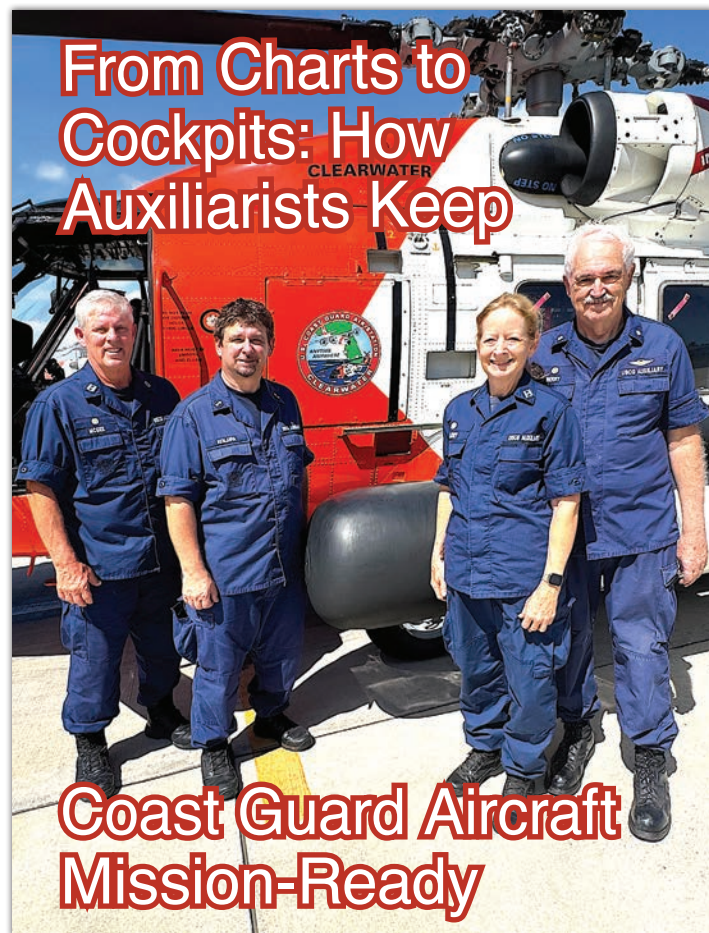
**DONATE TODAY!**

"We had 43 inches of water [in my house] ... I cannot thank CGMA ... enough for their support. I've never felt more taken care of in my life."

LT JOE RIZZARDI, CGC RESOLUTE



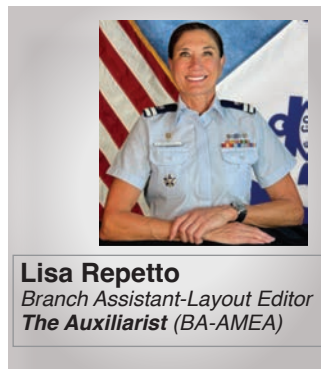




FLIP Changeout Team Members David McGee, Dunedin Flotilla 11-10, Mark Kolupa and Deb Mallory, Clearwater Flotilla 11-1, and John Berry, Sarasota Flotilla 84, pictured with a MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter at Air Station Clearwater, June 11, 2025.

Over the years, in my conversations with members of our flotilla, an activity called “Pubs Changeout” would be mentioned. I learned that the location of this activity is Air Station Clearwater (ASC) because it is specific to aircraft. It is the task of removing and replacing publications that serve as paper backups to modern electronic data available on tablets or cockpit computer systems, such as satellite navigation (GPS), ground-based radio (VOR), terminal area charts, air traffic control procedures, and more. This activity piqued my curiosity, and I wanted to learn more about it. The day arrived when I would finally get a chance to observe a Pubs Changeout. The formal name of this activity is Flight Information Publications (FLIP) changeout mission—commonly referred to as “Pubs Changeout.”

On the morning of June 11, 2025, I drove to Air Station Clearwater, Fla., located in the Coast Guard Auxiliary’s Southeast District. FLIP changeout team member Mark Kolupa was in the parking lot awaiting my arrival. Together, we walked through the C-27 hangar into the flight operations room. Already at work sorting publications were Auxiliarists Deb Mallory, David McGee, and John Berry. Watching the well-seasoned team sort and organize bundles of documents quickly and methodically was impressive. Stacks of publications covered the countertops, waiting to be sorted.



**Lisa Repetto**  
Branch Assistant-Layout Editor  
*The Auxiliarist* (BA-AMEA)

Note: Team leader Deb Mallory has 21 years of FLIP changeout experience, and team member Mark Kolupa has 11 years—both are long-time Southeast District, Clearwater Flotilla 11-1 members. David McGee, Dunedin Flotilla 11-10, has been a FLIP changeout team member for two and a half years, and John Berry, Division 8, Sarasota Flotilla 84, for three and a half years.

I inquired as to which publications belong in which aircraft. Deb explained, “Each type of aircraft—C-27 fixed-wing and MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter (helo)—receives a selection of publications that are identified by the crew members who fly that aircraft and their Area of Operation (AOR). For example, fixed-wing aircraft such as the C-27s receive publications that aren’t used by the helos because of their instrumentation features and AOR. Flight crews from Air Station Clearwater use charts that cover the Caribbean and southeastern U.S., whereas flight crews from another Air Station might use charts that cover the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. These publications form a ‘kit’ and are considered the baseline for what goes into a C-27 or helo that flies out of ASC.” Each publication is placed in a designated location so that, regardless of which aircraft a crew member boards, they can always find the document in the same spot.

Once the helo publication bundles are ready for kitting, the boxes containing the bundles are driven in a utility cart to the helo hangar. Upon entering, I observed many helos undergoing varying types of maintenance. Aviation Maintenance Technicians (AMTs) were busy performing

maintenance on the helos. Up close, it is easy to view the complexity of these machines and wonder how they lift off the ground!

On this particular day, six helos were kitted. Mark mentioned, “Right door pockets for pilots contain mostly airport information publications, while co-pilot left door pockets hold IFR and VFR instruction publications for takeoffs and landings. In addition, FAA area navigation charts are also placed on the glare shield.” Helos carry fewer manuals due to their shorter flight range. “In a helo, the pilot sits in the right seat and the co-pilot sits in the left seat. I never heard an explanation for why, other than someone theorized that the early inventors of the helicopter were British,” Deb mentioned.

Upon conclusion of the helo kitting, the team returned to the flight operations room to begin the C-27 FLIP changeout. Instead of placing documents in the cockpit, according to Mark, “C-27s utilize removable pouches on both sides of the cargo hold, totaling nine pouches per side, plus one large bottom pouch for larger charts.” In the event an aircraft is not on base, a set of pouches is prepared by the team and is swapped out by maintenance personnel when the aircraft returns.

While FLIP team members are allowed to board C-27s to perform changeouts, they usually call on maintenance personnel for assistance. Deb explains why:

Many years ago, when additional pubs were kept in a suitcase, it was easy to install all the pubs in the plane. When suitcases were switched to hanging fabric bags with pouches, it became cumbersome to remove the bags without the risk of stumbling because the back of the plane was dark, and everything had to be done with a flashlight.

Avoiding injuries that could prevent Auxiliarists from conducting changeouts was the central factor. “Risk management was considered not only for this situation, but also for climbing into aircraft on tripod jacks undergoing maintenance, as well as approaching an aircraft that is fueling up,” Deb explains.

The Coast Guard is responsible for ordering all publications. Duplicate materials and documents for locations not normally flown, such as Alaska, are available to pilots and aircrews in designated drawers. In case you

are wondering what happens to expired publications, they are returned to the flight operations room and placed in recycling receptacles. Mark mentioned, “Some chart maps are repurposed as holiday gift wrapping paper for aircrew and maintenance personnel.” What a great idea!

FLIP changeouts generally occur every 56 days and normally take the team three to four hours to complete. It is a physically demanding activity compared to a typical desk job—requiring the ability to lift and carry boxes weighing up to 20 pounds and working in extreme heat and cold temperatures.

FLIP changeouts highlight the critical support Auxiliarists provide to Coast Guard aviation operations. By ensuring that aircrews have up-to-date aviation publications, we play a vital role in maintaining safety and mission readiness at Air Station Clearwater. This activity is unique to ASC and, as David McGee pointed out, “Air Station Clearwater is the only Coast Guard air station where Auxiliarists perform this important activity.”

Thank you, FLIP Changeout Team—your work is vital and commendable!

BRAVO ZULU! 🇺🇸

### USCG Air Station Clearwater Aircraft Publication List

- FAA Terminal Procedures & Area Charts
- Standard Terminal Arrival Routes (STARs), part of FAA air traffic control procedure
- DOD Flight Information Handbook (FIH)
- Instrument Flight Rules (IFR)
- Low Altitude Enroute Charts
- IFR High Altitude Enroute Charts
- IFR Supplement
- Visual Flight Rules (VFR) Supplement
- Sectional Approach Charts
- Terminal Area Charts (TAC)
- DOD Approach Plates
- Caribbean & South American Approach Plates
- Caribbean & South American Low Altitude Enroute Charts
- Caribbean & South American High Altitude Enroute Charts
- US Terminal Procedures



Air Station Clearwater’s unit logo pictured on a helicopter.

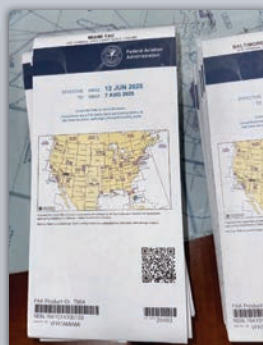
Article Contributors: Mark Kolupa and Deb Mallory  
All photos: Lisa Repetto, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary



Publications prior to sorting.



Deb Mallory, John Berry, and Mark Kolupa kitting the publications.



FAA Terminal Area Charts.



David McGee and Mark Kolupa updating the C-27 bags with new publications.



Mark Kolupa holding documents to be installed in the helos.



David McGee placing documents on a helo cockpit glare shield.



Mark Kolupa and Deb Mallory installing new publications in a helo.



John Berry, Deb Mallory, Mark Kolupa, and David McGee installing new publications in a MHT-60 Jayhawk.



Mark Kolupa inserting documents in a door pocket.



## CELEBRATING



## Zory Sorrentino: A Life of Dedication to Family and the Coast Guard Auxiliary

By Zoraida Sorrentino  
R. Michael Stringer, AUXPA3

Zory Sorrentino's journey with the Coast Guard Auxiliary began in 1974, when a chance encounter with Bill Sorrentino, a New York City police officer and Auxiliarist, led to a lifelong partnership. They met at a restaurant in Bayshore, Long Island, after both visited Fire Island. A last-minute change in plans placed them on the same ferry, and a shared dinner table sparked a connection. Bill offered Zoraida (Zory) and her roommate a ride home, during which he explained the Auxiliary's mission. They began dating and were engaged three months later.

During their engagement, Zory attended flotilla meetings at Coast Guard Station Rockaway, where Bill served with Jamaica Bay Flotilla 11-1. At her first meeting, she noticed they were the youngest attendees—most members were veterans from World Wars I and II. Many had joined the Auxiliary to patrol U.S. waters and later became Temporary Members of the Coast Guard Reserve.

After marrying on May 31, 1975, Zory joined the Auxiliary, co-owning a 32-foot Pacemaker boat with Bill. She had already attended meetings and training sessions, so on September 26, 1975, she officially enrolled. She completed the Boating Skills and Seamanship course and Basic Qualification training, earning BQ status on October 29, 1975. This qualified her for boat crew service, and she participated in surface patrols until the birth of her first child in 1976.

In 1977, while Bill was on patrol, Zory went into labor with their second child. She contacted Station Rockaway, and a 41-foot boat was dispatched to bring Bill ashore. With a police escort, they reached the hospital in time. That same year, Zory became a certified instructor and later a Courtesy Examiner (now Vessel Examiner). She served as flotilla vice commander from 1979 to 1980 but stepped back from elected office after the birth of her third child and a new teaching role in special education Spanish.

Throughout the 1980s, Zory remained active in staff roles. Before AUXDATA, members submitted handwritten or typed AUXMIS reports, and all communications were sent via mail. Division Commanders were called Division Captains, and District Captains were Rear Commodores.

After Bill's retirement from the NYPD in 1990, they moved to Florida and joined Flotilla 44 in Daytona Beach, a WWII-era flotilla. With more time, Zory regained her instructor qualification, became an Aids to Navigation Verifier, joined the Interpreter Corps, and held various staff positions. She served as division secretary, branch chief in multiple directorates, and ADSO-OP (Interpreter) in Southeast District. Eventually, she became Flotilla Commander and later Division Commander of Division 4.

Among her most memorable experiences was serving on a boat crew during a 1998 space shuttle security operation. A Coast Guard officer aboard allowed the Auxiliary vessel to fly the Coast Guard ensign, and watching the launch from the water was unforgettable.

In 2010, following the Deepwater Horizon disaster, Zory helped translate Spanish-language press releases. After weeks of work, she learned the CIA would take over the task—an unexpected twist she didn't question further.



At the 2018 Southeast District Training (D-TRAIN) conference in Orlando, Zoraida Sorrentino poses with then-CDR Xaimara "Mara" Vicencio-Roldan, U.S. Coast Guard, Planning and Force Readiness Division. Both women are from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. USCG Auxiliary photo.

During Hurricane Matthew in 2016, as Flotilla Commander, she received a call about a Coast Guard radio left on the floor of the flotilla building. Despite the approaching storm, she and Bill assessed the risk and retrieved the radio safely, navigating debris-filled roads under curfew.

Zory and Bill also supported the Southeast District Director's Office in Miami, with Zory handling administrative tasks and Bill managing security. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Zory coordinated a division-wide effort to produce 310 face masks for Coast Guard personnel. She also encouraged blood donations, resulting in 16 members contributing. Later, she helped lead Operation "Fill the Boat," a holiday food drive that exceeded expectations, filling nearly two boats with donations.

Today, Zory continues her service through program visitations and mentoring Spanish-speaking members. She recently helped translate a public education course into Spanish.

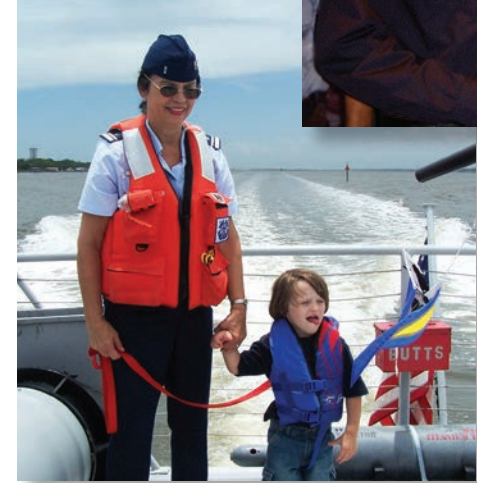
The year 2025 marks three major milestones: 50 years in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, 50 years of marriage, and 50 years as the spouse of a dedicated police officer. Bill remains active in law enforcement, and Zory finds purpose and relief in her Auxiliary duties, which help ease the daily concerns of being a police officer's spouse.

She cherishes the camaraderie of flotilla meetings and conferences and fondly remembers the flotilla and division rendezvous of the 1970s and '80s—fellowship events where members rafted up their boats and visited one another. It's a tradition she hopes will return. 🚤



Zoraida Sorrentino, on special assignment within the Southeast District's area of responsibility, prepares to board a Coast Guard Auxiliary aircraft. USCG Auxiliary photos.

Bill and Zoraida Sorrentino at the Western Theme Fun Night during the Southeast District's 2008 D-TRAIN conference. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Photo



Zoraida Sorrentino with her two-year-old grandson, Dalton Mason, during a public affairs event in 2006 at Daytona Beach aboard a World War II Motor Torpedo Boat. Dalton is now 21 years old. USCG Auxiliary photo





# 25 Years and Counting: The Coast Guard Continues to Bring Christmas Cheer to Needy Chicago Families

By Matthew Thompson, AUXPA1, National Division Chief, Communications

Over one hundred years ago in late November, hundreds of anxious families from the Chicago area waited at a dock on the Chicago River near the Clark St. bridge for a ship that would never arrive. The *Rouse Simmons*, owned by Captain Captain Herman Schuenemann, had been lost with all hands in a storm on Lake Michigan.

The *Rouse Simmons*, also known as the Christmas Tree Ship, was due back from Thompson, Mich., with over 3,000 Christmas trees onboard. CAPT Schuenemann, who was referred to as “Captain Santa,” believed that no one should be without a tree at Christmas time. Every year, he would give away trees to families in the Chicago area who were normally unable to afford one in the hopes of spreading hope and cheer during the holiday season.

Over the years following the loss of the Christmas Tree Ship and Captain Santa, many Chicagoans recalled fond memories of the Schuenemanns and shared stories of the family’s generosity and kindness. In the summer of 2000, at the start of the Chicago to Mackinac race while onboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Mackinaw* WAGB-83, David Truitt shared such a story with the commanding officer, Captain John Nickerson. Mr. Truitt’s passion for the maritime legacy of Chicago and the Great Lakes inspired CAPT Nickerson to help him revive the Christmas Tree Ship tradition. “Chicago is a favorite port,” recalled CAPT Nickerson, “At Christmas time, it’s a special place to be.” “For many kids in Chicago, there won’t be a tree or anything to perform that kind of magic,” Mr. Truitt told the *Chicago Tribune* in 2000. “It is a way to bring the wonder and joy of a decorated tree on Christmas morning to lower-income households.”



Captain Schuenemann (Center) Master of the *Rouse Simmons*, early 1900’s.

Mr. Truitt was able to use his vast network of connections to secure sponsorships and form partnerships with Chicago’s Navy Pier, the Ada S. McKinley Foundation, and many other volunteer groups while CAPT Nickerson coordinated with District Nine leadership to make the inaugural event happen. The community’s response was overwhelming. When the *Mackinaw* arrived in Chicago with 1,200 Christmas trees from Cheboygan, Mich. in early December of 2000, the ship was met with crowds of eager volunteers and spectators with eyes filled with tears of joy because it would be the first time that they would have a tree in their home for Christmas.



Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Heath Jones, *Mackinaw* Commanding Officer Commander Jeanette Greene, Great Lakes District Commander Rear Admiral John Hickey, Personnel Service Center Commanding Officer Rear Admiral Zeita Merchant, and Sector Lake Michigan Commanding Officer Captain Seth Parker hold the Christmas Tree Pennant while posing in front of the 1,200 Christmas Trees being delivered to Chicago by the USCGC *Mackinaw* during the Grand Arrival event held before the tree offload the next day. U.S. Coast Guard Photo by Matthew Thompson, AUXPA1



Crew members of the USCGC *Mackinaw* WLBB-30 hand off trees to hundreds of volunteers. The trees are loaded onto trucks and sent to various community organizations where they will be given to needy families. U.S. Coast Guard Photos by Matthew Thompson, AUXPA1



“The Christmas Tree Ship mission is a direct honor to Great Lakes history, a celebration of the holiday spirit, and the Coast Guard’s link in a chain of events that must happen to get 1,200 trees on the docks in Chicago for the most deserving of recipients” states Commander Jeannette Greene, Commanding Officer of the USCGC *Mackinaw* WLBB-30, the current Christmas Tree Ship. Although it is the ship that brings the trees to Chicago, “it is a direct reflection of all the hard work put into the event by the crew, their families, the Cheboygan community, and the Christmas Tree Ship Committee” CDR Greene continued. “It is even more special as it is the 25th year and we have brought back some previous *Mackinaw* Commanding Officers who have helped keep this tradition alive.”

George Kiesel, the Chairman of the Christmas Tree Ship Committee, has been involved with the event for 20 years. He stated that over the years, the Committee has become more sophisticated and incorporated geographic information system (GIS) technology to make sure the trees are going to the areas of the city that are the most underserved. “These trees are bringing holiday cheer and connect community members with services that they may not know they had access to” Mr. Kiesel stated. This year, according to Mr. Kiesel, 18 different organizations participated in the event under the supervision of the Ada S. McKinley Foundation which provides guidance on which areas are in the most need and what organizations are in the best position to assist.

“The Christmas Tree Ship event is an incredible opportunity to partner with and serve the great city of Chicago,” states Admiral John Hickey, Coast Guard District Commander. “This event brings people together from all across the country to celebrate... and the trees brought in by the *Mackinaw* will serve over 1,000 families and allow people to enjoy the holiday season.” “It is amazing to see the entire crew and Cheboygan community work together to load Christmas Trees on the ship to sail to Chicago,” states Ensign Zoe Cousineau, project manager for the event. “Christmas Tree Ship is not only about bringing trees to deserving families but also about strengthening the bonds between the Coast Guard and the people we proudly serve.”

Since the initial tree run, the crews and ships have changed, but many of the volunteers and members of the Christmas Tree Ship Committee have remained the same. Sadly, Mr. Truitt crossed the bar in the fall of 2024. “Without him, the event would have never happened” stated CAPT Nickerson. However, despite the loss of the Committee’s longtime friend and supporter, Mr. Kiesel is hopeful that the tradition will continue for years to come and honor Mr. Truitt’s ongoing legacy of supporting the City of Chicago, its maritime heritage, and those who have sailed the Great Lakes while continuing to connect services and community organizations with their constituents through the hope and cheer that can be brought forth by the simplest of items—a Christmas Tree. 🌲



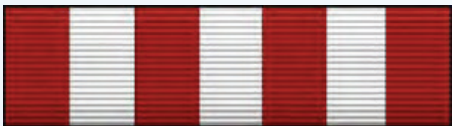
USCGC *Mackinaw* WLBB-30 docked at Navy Pier in Chicago, IL with Christmas Trees on the deck. The trees will be offloaded by crew members and volunteers and sent to various community organizations to be given to needy families. U.S. Coast Guard Photo by Matthew Thompson, AUXPA1



# The Importance of Well-Trained Public Affairs Specialists in Today's U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

By Mary Patton, AUXPA1

In an era where effective communication is as vital as operational readiness, the role of Public Affairs (PA) officers in the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary can't be overstated. These volunteers serve as the vital link between the Auxiliary and the public, translating complex missions and values into accessible messages that foster trust, transparency, and support for the organization.



### Enhancing Public Understanding and Trust

Despite its critical contributions, public awareness of the Auxiliary's role is often limited. Skilled PA officers play a crucial role in bridging this gap. Press releases, social media campaigns, community outreach, and local media engagement ensure the public remains informed about the Auxiliary's impact and services. This outreach builds understanding and cultivates the public trust necessary for effective maritime safety.

### Supporting Recruitment and Retention

A well-executed PA strategy is integral to attracting new members and retaining experienced volunteers. By showcasing the many opportunities and meaningful contributions available within the Auxiliary, PA officers can help to convey a compelling narrative that draws in individuals looking to serve their communities. Highlighting member stories, mission successes, and training opportunities helps foster a sense of pride and purpose, strengthening morale and commitment within the organization.

### Crisis Communication and Public Safety Messaging

During emergencies—such as natural disasters, search and rescue missions, or maritime accidents, PA officers are often on the front lines of communication. Their ability to deliver timely, accurate, and empathetic information is crucial to maintaining public calm, dispelling misinformation, and supporting operational efforts. Well-trained PA officers understand how to navigate sensitive situations, work with the media, and align their messaging with the larger goals of the Coast Guard.

### Professionalism and Consistency Across the Organization

A standardized and comprehensive training program for PA officers, such as AUX-12 classes, ensures consistency in messaging, tone, and branding across all levels of the Auxiliary. This cohesion enhances the professionalism of the organization and ensures that all public-facing communications reflect the Coast Guard's values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty. Well-trained PA officers are also better equipped to use modern communication tools and platforms, from social media to digital content creation, making the Auxiliary's outreach efforts more effective and wide-reaching.

### Public Affairs Specialist Program

There are three levels of Public Affairs Specialist.

**Entry Level, AUXPA3:** Members will develop experience in writing for the media, making public appearances, setting up static displays, taking digital photographs, and publicizing the National Safe Boating campaign. These are the minimum skills expected of a flotilla public affairs officer. When you are certified at this level, you are authorized to wear the distinctive red and white "candy cane" ribbon.

**Intermediate Level, AUXPA2:** This level requires a higher level of expertise. AUXPA2s are expected to demonstrate first-rate public relations skills and assist others in developing their skills. Mentoring interested members is necessary to develop the next cohort of qualified Public Affairs officers. At this level, you might be appointed as a district or division Public Affairs officer. Once you are certified as an AUXPA2, you are authorized to wear a star on your PA ribbon.

**Senior Level, AUXPA1:** When you reach this advanced level, you are qualified to assist a Coast Guard unit with their public affairs program. As such, you may be requested to take photos at a Coast Guard Change of Command or awards ceremony. During disasters, you may be asked to assist in a Joint Information Center (JIC) operation assisting the Coast Guard. When you are certified as an AUXPA1, you are authorized to wear two stars on your PA ribbon.



Well-trained Public Affairs officers are better equipped to use modern communication tools and platforms, from social media to digital content creation, making the Auxiliary's outreach efforts more effective and wide-reaching.  
Photo by Nick Morrison on Unsplash, edited.

Public Affairs is an exciting competency. You are the life force of the Auxiliary. It is the Public Affairs officer who tells the Auxiliary story and who writes and speaks about the missions of the Auxiliary.

### Conclusion

The importance of a well-trained cadre of Public Affairs officers in the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary lies not just in what they communicate, but in how and why they do so. They are storytellers, educators, crisis managers, and ambassadors, all rolled into one. Their work strengthens the Auxiliary's public image, supports its mission, and ensures the public remains informed, engaged, and supportive. Investing in the training and development of these officers is not just beneficial—it is essential to the continued success and growth of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

For more information on Public Affairs qualifications go to: <https://www.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=A-DEPT&category=pa-specialist>





# Operations Key Ring and Vigilant Sentry: Auxiliary Contributions to Humanitarian Missions Forty Years Apart

By: LCDR Chris Booth,  
Director, Vessel Traffic Service Lower Mississippi River  
New Orleans, La.

As vessels extremely overloaded with desperate Cuban emigrants seeking a new home in the United States filled the Florida Straits in the Spring of 1980, the Coast Guard surged cutters and aircraft from across the country to the scene, along with calling up 900 personnel from the Reserves to provide relief to the crisis. As Coast Guard resources were stretched thin, the Auxiliary was also asked to provide



Operation Key Ring—Spring, 1980  
Photo provided by U.S. Coast Guard.

In the Spring of 1980, the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy were taxed to the extreme and struggling to meet ever-growing mission demands. The cause of the exceptional workload was Cuban President Fidel Castro’s announcement in April of that year that Cuban citizens would be allowed to embark vessels from the port city of Mariel for passage to the United States. Castro’s declaration prompted a sudden mass emigration event, in what was to become known as the Mariel Boatlift, that rapidly overwhelmed Coast Guard and Navy assets stationed in the Caribbean Sea. By the middle of May, the Coast Guard was authorized to call up reserve forces to assist with the humanitarian and security crisis in what was designated as Operation Key Ring, but the call for support was also answered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary. This proud moment in the Auxiliary’s past provides a direct linkage to the recent Auxiliary contributions to Operation Vigilant Sentry. A look at both of these humanitarian operations off the Florida coast demonstrates the ever-growing augmentation capabilities of the Auxiliary, as seen in the different methods by which Auxiliarists assisted Coast Guard efforts during these challenging moments in American history.

as much assistance as it could, and indeed the men and women of the Southeastern District stepped up in a large way. Over the course of the spring, as the Mariel Boatlift reached its apex, the Auxiliary devoted over 25,000 hours to the cause in two main aspects: communication support and search and rescue operations. Setting up a temporary communications center on Big Pine Key, the Auxiliary established three radio stations that were online for the majority of each day during Operation Key Ring, enhancing the ability for American assets in the region to detect incoming vessels from Cuba and just as often triangulate where search and rescue efforts should be focused.

Auxiliary augmentation of search and rescue missions during the height of Operation Key Ring was also essential, as there were simply too many vessels in need of assistance for Coast Guard units to manage. With the situation proving untenable, Coast Guard leadership empowered Auxiliarists to stand watch at Coast Guard units and/or get underway in their own vessels to conduct search and rescue operations in the instances that Coast Guard units could not respond. Not surprisingly, the Auxiliary answered the call, conducting over 400 patrols and handling approximately 75 search and rescue cases, along with staffing Coast Guard units that were depleted

due to the high op-tempo. For the communications, search and rescue, and unit augmentation efforts, the Auxiliary was recognized by then Commandant, Admiral John Hayes, with a Coast Guard Unit Commendation. After action reports estimated that over 125,000 Cuban immigrants made it to the United States during the Mariel Boatlift, but also highlighted that the Coast Guard, Auxiliary and Navy rendered assistance to over 1,400 vessels over the duration of Operation Key Ring.

Moving ahead forty plus years to 2022, the Auxiliary contributed significantly to another humanitarian mission in the same region, this time through efforts related to supporting Coast Guard work in Operation Vigilant Sentry. Originally approved in 2004, Operation Vigilant Sentry, an inter-agency, Department of Homeland Security led Task Force overseen by the Coast Guard, has experienced numerous operational ebbs and flows. However, a sharp rise in illegal immigration in 2022 saw that year become one of the deadliest years for migrants in recent history. With Coast Guard units and personnel increasingly deployed to assist with this humanitarian crisis, the Auxiliary, reminiscent of its contributions to Operation Key Ring four decades beforehand, again stepped forward and provided crucial assistance via a number of methods. Displaying exceptional competence, Auxiliarists augmented Coast Guard efforts related to Operation Vigilant Sentry in 2022 and 2023 through Auxiliary Interpreters, Auxiliary Chaplain Support, and Auxiliary Aviation.

As can be imagined in situations that occurred often during Operation Vigilant Sentry, language barriers were encountered that hampered successful completion of interdiction and humanitarian efforts. Working closely with Coast Guard crews, Auxiliary Interpreters leveraged their skills to facilitate effective communications and maintain positive control over situations where multiple languages were being spoken. During this heightened period of effort, Auxiliary Interpreters contributed over 3,500 hours of support to the Coast Guard and Operation Vigilant Sentry, where they regularly de-escalated tense situations and provided operational commanders with enhanced situational awareness that was only made available by their linguistic contributions. Auxiliary Chaplain Support was also extremely impactful, as ten chaplains deployed to Operation Vigilant Sentry during this period. The breadth of religious ministry support that Auxiliary Chaplains provided to Coast Guard crews was tremendous, as several served long-term stints underway on Coast Guard cutters while others provided services or offered counseling in stress management ashore.

Finally, Auxiliary Aviators provided key assistance to Coast Guard migrant interdiction efforts during the recent Operation Vigilant Sentry surge. In 2023, Auxiliary Aviation flew an astounding 150 missions totaling over 700 hours in flight. These flights ensured key oversight of the region was maintained and that critical situational awareness was preserved for the operational commanders. Further, Auxiliary support was prevalent in the District Seven Incident Command Post, as the Assistant Air Boss position was staffed by Auxiliarist Wilson Riggan who coordinated all Auxiliary flights in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry. Auxiliarist Riggan summed up Auxiliary aviation efforts succinctly by noting that, “It is exciting for Auxiliarists to have the opportunity to put our professional aviation background and skillsets to work for the Coast Guard. Each of us has a unique set of knowledge and skills that we enjoy putting to use for the Coast Guard.”

The Auxiliary most certainly has put forward their best efforts and skills to support Coast Guard missions, as evidenced in both Operation Key Ring and Operation Vigilant Sentry. These historic humanitarian and security focused operations placed the Coast Guard in situations that required Auxiliary contributions in order to succeed, and the Auxiliary stepped forward both times and provided its expertise in numerous fields that increased operational effectiveness. As described in Auxiliarist Riggan’s quote above, the Auxiliary is comprised of outstanding individuals with diverse skillsets who desire to volunteer and assist the Coast Guard achieve mission success, and there is no doubt that in the two operations described in this article that the Auxiliary and its dedicated members did just that. 🇺🇸



Operation Vigilant Sentry—2022-2023  
Photo provided by U.S. Coast Guard.



# Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival Honors Service and Spirit in a Week of Celebration

By Matt Thompson, AUXPA1, National Division Chief–Communications / Great Lakes Western Region District Staff Officer–Public Affairs

The 101st annual Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival, held July 25–August 3, 2025, once again brought together thousands of visitors, service members, and community partners to celebrate the rich maritime heritage of “Coast Guard City, USA.” From family-friendly fun to solemn moments of remembrance, this year’s festival honored the men and women who serve while offering a week packed with activities along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

## A Festive Start on the Waterfront

The festival opened with the beloved Kids’ Parade, followed by the ever-entertaining cardboard boat races. Creative teams launched their handcrafted vessels into the water with varying degrees of success—some designs glided impressively, while others barely lasted thirty seconds. Fortunately, members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the local Fire Department stood ready to assist, ensuring safety throughout the event. Sector Field Office (SFO) Grand Haven and Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) Muskegon both fielded teams for the race, though the Muskegon crew’s boat met an early end to much laughter and good humor.

Sunday’s Community Picnic at Mulligan’s Hollow featured music, games, and plenty of food, highlighted by tours of Air Station Detroit’s MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and a lively dunk tank featuring local celebrities, community leaders, and SFO Commanding Officer LT Lisa Pietruszka.

## The Arrival of the Mackinaw

Monday marked one of the week’s most anticipated moments—the arrival of USCGC *Mackinaw* (WLBB-30) in Grand Haven. Escorted by a fleet of Coast Guard, Auxiliary, and Ottawa County Sheriff’s boats, along with an MH-65 Dolphin circling overhead, the cutter’s entrance drew huge crowds to the pier. Spectators waved and cheered as the ship made its way into port, creating an atmosphere more reminiscent of a concert than a ship arrival.

## Search and Rescue and Kids’ Day Excitement

Tuesday brought an impressive Search and Rescue demonstration by Air Station Detroit’s crew on the Grand River, showcasing the precision and teamwork behind Coast Guard operations. Meanwhile, Kids’ Day offered

younger visitors a chance to meet Coastie the Safety Boat, enjoy games, and sample sweet treats—an energetic and joyful highlight for families.

## Honoring Service and Skill

Wednesday’s Senior Day featured the U.S. Coast Guard Silent Drill Team, whose flawless performance captivated the audience. Their precision movements and audience participation drew rounds of applause and admiration. The Drill Team later appeared at the solemn memorial service honoring fallen Coast Guard members and again in the Grand Parade, where their presence added dignity and pride to the festivities.

Throughout the week, cutter tours provided the public with an inside look at Coast Guard operations and life aboard a U.S. Coast Guard vessel. Thanks to the Coast Guard Auxiliary’s volunteer tour guides, crews had the opportunity to relax and enjoy some well-earned downtime around Grand Haven.



Photo: Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival Facebook Page.

Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival Guide  
Image: Travel-MI.com.



USCG Color Guard participates in the Kids’ Parade. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



The USCGC *Mackinaw*, escorted by a USCG patrol boat. Auxiliary photo by Cindy Alexander.



Rescue swimmer prepares to deploy from a MH-65 Dolphin helicopter. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



Families enjoying a close-up look at an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



Cardboard Boat Race participants. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



View from the USCGC *Mackinaw*’s bridge deck. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



Search and Rescue demonstration; rescue swimmer performing a simulated rescue. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



Kids’ Day fun at the dunk tank. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



Distinguished Guests and Meaningful Moments

Friday brought many high-level visitors to town, including Senior Advisor to the Secretary for the Coast Guard Sean Plankey, Great Lakes District Commanding Officer Rear Admiral John Hickey, Acting Commandant Admiral Kevin Lunday, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Philip Waldron, and Auxiliary National Commodore Mary Kirkwood. The day’s ceremonies included speeches, awards, and a particularly memorable moment as Great Lakes District Western Region Commodore Rob Kumpf was recognized as an honorary Chief Petty Officer.

That afternoon, the mood shifted as the community and service members gathered for the annual National Memorial Service, a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by Coast Guard members in service to the nation.

Later that evening, senior leaders, including the Acting Commandant and National Commodore, joined Auxiliary boat crews on the water, creating a once-in-a-lifetime experience for volunteers. Even the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard took the helm of an Auxiliary 44-foot motor lifeboat—an unforgettable highlight for all aboard.

A Grand Finale

Saturday’s Grand Parade filled the streets of downtown Grand Haven with music, color, and cheers as Coast Guard units, marching bands, and local organizations passed by waving crowds. The excitement continued into the evening with a spectacular concert featuring Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band. Their high-energy performance had the crowd dancing before the night culminated in the traditional fireworks extravaganza over the water—a brilliant display that brought the weeklong celebration to a dazzling close.

From the laughter of children to the solemn moments of remembrance, the 2025 Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival captured the spirit of service, community, and pride that defines the U.S. Coast Guard and the city that honors it every year.



Acting Commandant Admiral Kevin Lunday addresses Coast Guard active-duty members and Auxiliaries. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



USCG active-duty members honoring the fallen at the National Memorial Service. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



USCG Pipe Band performing at the Grand Parade. Auxiliary photo by Matt Thompson, AUXPA1.



Spectacular drone display at the fireworks extravaganza. Auxiliary photo by Dean Christy, AUXPA3.

THE AUXILIARIST

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COVER



**2024 Auxiliarist of the Year—Matt Thompson**  
A lifelong interest with the U.S. Coast Guard culminates with a devoted volunteer relationship with the service and his being named the 2024 Auxiliarist of the Year. Coast Guard Auxiliary Photo.

BACK COVER



**Paddlecraft Safety—An Increasingly Important Mission**  
Paddling is a steadily growing segment of the recreational boating market and correspondingly, so does the need to educate participants on how to enjoy the sport safely. Coast Guard Auxiliary Photo.



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