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First Quarter 2006 Game Plan for Public Affairs Officers

By: Ed Sweeney DC-Ad

If any of you are like me, I often dread the holidays. Not that I am a total scrooge, but I get tired of the commercialism, but that is another story for some other time.

Like a kid awaiting Santa Clause, I anxiously await the end of the holiday season so I can get started on my PA program for the New Year!

What's the hurry, you say? After all, many areas won't have much boating activity until mid-April or later. Well, I say Public Affairs work is like Christmas shopping, in that there is much PA work to be done, and often there is less time to do it than we realize. Even if you are one of those people who mourn the passage of the holiday season, hopefully this message will convince you that there is still no time like the present to get a grip on what needs to be done to get your Public Affairs program off to a fast start for 2006.

TIS THE SEASON - FOR BOAT SHOWS...

While on the water activity in many areas have slowed to a crawl, chances are that boat shows are coming to your area sometime in the next couple of months. Here are some ideas to help you maximize your exposure at the boat shows:

- A good place to start preparing for boat shows is by reading or re-reading the PA Department's *Guide to Watchstanding at Boat Shows*, available at the following link: <http://www.auxadept.org/downloads/BoatShows.pdf>. This is a must reading for new FSOs-PA or anyone who has not stood watch at a boat show before. Also be sure to check out other training resources for Boat Show Exhibits located at <http://www.auxadept.org/training/exhibits.htm>.
- Make sure we have an exhibit at as many boat shows as possible. Check out www.boatshows.com/ and www.discoverboating.com/. While these do not have every boat show in the world listed, they have a majority of them. If the show wants to charge you for an exhibit space, you can contact the organizer and offer to perform demonstrations on knot tying, the Sea partners program, etc.
- Stock up on supplies: Now is the time to make sure to order ample amounts of materials via your FSO-MA, BoatUS, insurance companies, State, etc. Staples should include things like federal regulations, the You're In Command materials, Waterway Watch brochures and decals, and *Join the Auxiliary* brochures. But don't forget unique items, such as the Adventures of Captain Clearwater, and Inky the Whale, available from the MSO. Anything for the kids that can help spread the boating safety message is invaluable.

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FIRST QUARTER GAME PLAN (Continued from Page 1)

- Coordinate with other local flotillas and other agencies (Sheriff, USPS, State Department of Boating, etc) that might be at the show; this way you can all bring something a little different. Also, consider inviting active duty Coast Guard units in your area, as this is a great way for the silver and gold to get to know one another. The folks from the Sea Partners program at your local MSO have some great ideas on how to set up an eye catching display at boat shows. If there is a recruiting office nearby, ask them if they would like to help stand watch. If they can't make it, offer to display some of their recruiting literature and contact information.
- Be sure to have a sign-up list for your PE classes and VSCs. I find this works out better than having brochures with class dates and VSC stations for two reasons: (1) brochures cost money, and may end up never being read (like many items picked up at boat shows); and (2) with a list, you can now create a database of contacts. And, if you ask for their e-mail address, you REALLY have a cost-effective means of contacting potential customers/clients. This can represent a potential list of PE students and VSCs for the balance of the year! You can also hand out the CGA/AIM inquiry cards. It is best to collect these and forward them to your FSO-CC so they can have a list of potential candidates to follow up on.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS

It's that time of year - to reflect on the prior year and make new resolutions for the upcoming one. For many people this may include serving their community and the country. What better way to do that than to join the USCGAUX. Work with your PS Officer to develop a recruiting game plan, and support them any way you can. Remember, recruiting, like public affairs, is everyone's responsibility!

IT'LL BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT...

NO, I am not talking about Christmas 2006 (although that, too, will be here before we know it); I'm talking about National Safe Boating Campaign, (aka NSBW) which will take place this year May 20-26. This year's slogan is still " BOAT SMART, BOAT SAFE" to reflect the homeland security angle.

Here are some suggestions that you can do NOW to ensure a successful National Safe Boating Week:

- Check out the National Safe Boating Council's web site at: <http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/> . Specifically, check out the links labeled **Media Guide**, and **PRESSROOM**. There are lot of graphics and audio and video PSAs available to help get the message out. There are also some ready-made press releases on topics such as *How to Test Your PFD*, *Boating Accident Statistics*, *Help in Choosing a Kid's Life Jacket*, etc.
- Form a committee to plan out events during NSBW. Two (or more) heads are often better than one. No idea what to do? Don't reinvent the wheel, try some of these ideas:
 - Partner with a local Marine Dealer, and schedule a FREE PFD Check-Up during NSBW. Believe me, in my District (11NR), we've done this last few years with the CA Department of Boating and Waterways, and it continues to be a BIG hit! Using this program, have our Vessel Examiners check out the serviceability of PFDs, and either ask the Marine Dealer to have a fixed number of PFDs available for a trade-in, or offer discount coupons on the purchase of new PFDs inside the store.

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FIRST QUARTER GAME PLAN (Continued from Page 2)

- Coordinate with local law enforcement and fire/rescue agencies to set up a VSC Station. Be sure to invite all the local media, and have them walk through a VSC on one of the law enforcement or fire rescue boats. This is ideally done before NSBW to show the public that it is a painless process. Be sure to be ready to announce a schedule of VSC stations that will be available during week.
- If there is an AIR STA in your AOR, consider coordinating with them to perform a rescue demo during your celebration. Of course, be sure to invite the media, and if authorized by your DIRAUX, get them out on Auxiliary vessels so they can get “up close and personal” for the story. If possible, try to put a “local angle” on the story, highlighting local area danger spots or recent tragedies.
- Consider either a Children’s Essay Contest or Children’s Art Contest, with prizes (ideally children’s PFDs) donated from a local Marine Dealer. Announce the winners of the contest on a Sunday or a Monday as these are the slowest news days, and this will hopefully garner more press coverage.
- Consider having a Press Conference on Saturday, 20 May 2006, to kick off the event. Ask your DIRAUX or other local Gold Side Dignitary to speak, as well as the state or local law enforcement and/or rescue officials. Be sure to invite all the media, including the local newspapers. They love events like this as it helps makes them look more worldly. The best time for a press conference is late morning - 1000-1100. It is best to follow up with a phone call to the assignment editor the morning of the event.
- Local and state governments can and will issue a proclamation designating the week you hold your event to be North American Safe Boating Campaign Week. They need some lead-time so it is not too early to approach them now, or right after the first of the year.
- Lastly, be sure to post your NSBW events on the events calendar located at <http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/events/events.htm> .

I cannot overemphasize that the time to plan for these events is NOW. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE FIRST OF APRIL OR MAY, or you’ll regret it. The sheer stress of last minute-I-tis will kill you!

YOU AREN’T DONE YET

And just when you thought you were done. The beginning of the year is the prime time for two other areas: (1) getting students for PE classes; and (2) assisting in getting the word out about AIM . While these areas are not the primary responsibility of PA officers, you should offer to assist the FSO-PE and the Academy partners in promoting these programs. Here are some ideas that work for these two programs:

- Use the internet and local newspapers. My experience is that the majority of PE students come from either ads in local papers, or from classes posted on the internet. If the FSO-PE has not done so, offer to post the information on upcoming PE classes on the internet. Make sure you hit the BoatUS course line, as well as the Auxiliary web sites, and provide class schedules to you local RBS Program Visitors(see below). Local newspapers also are a great way to generate awareness of the AIM programs. If possible, you can also try to get the webmasters of high school web sites to post an electronic flyer on their web site as a reminder. Since procedures have changed, be sure to check with one of the Academy partners

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FIRST QUARTER GAME PLAN (Continued from Page 3)

- Help the program managers (FSO-PE or Academy partner) make flyers about their upcoming classes, or information sessions. Work with your RBS PVs to distribute flyers to your local Marine Dealers. Flyers about the AIM programs can be handed out at local high school sporting events (with their permission - of course), or even better yet, help the Academy Partners staff an information exhibit at the event, and offer boating safety literature as well.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU...

The Public Affairs department staff is available to assist you with ideas for your PA programs. And be sure to check out our web site www.auxpa.org. It has many tools to help make your job easier. Moreover, the website now has a mechanism to help tell the world about your accomplishments. Visit <http://www.auxpa.org/dept/story.php>, and fill out the online form to send us information on stories you think may be of interest to the media. **This form is available to anyone interested in public affairs who wants to help us tell the Auxiliary story- you do not have to be a public affairs officer to use this form.**

Take advantage of the resources available on our site, and also be sure to utilize the External Communications Department to help contact the media with your newsworthy deeds and accomplishments. Stay in touch with happenings from the national PA Department by subscribing to our auxpao mailing list at <http://list.auxpa.org/mailman/listinfo/auxpao>. **This list is available to anyone interested in public affairs - you do not have to be a public affairs officer to subscribe.**



Aux-12 Public Affairs

Course Description

AUX-12 Auxiliary Public Affairs C School is the boot camp for basic training for Auxiliary public affairs officers. We hope and expect that every public affairs officer in the country will take this class in order to perform their duties effectively. The course teaches the students how to correctly send out Press Releases, manage Media Relations, Media Interviews, Photography, Copy Editing/News writing, Article submissions to local, national level and other public affairs matters of special interest to the Auxiliary.

This is a fun filled weekend starting on a Friday morning and ending on a Sunday afternoon.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- .. Aux 12-8 Public Affairs Class in St Louis , MO. The class is 24-26 JAN 2006
- .. Aux 12-9 Public Affairs Class in CGI, Alameda, CA. The class is 24-26 FEB 2006
- .. Aux 12-10 Public Affairs Class in USCGA, New London, CT. The class is 2-4 JUN 2006
- .. Aux 12-11 Public Affairs Class in USCGA, Charleston, SC. The class is 28-30 JULY 2006

Deadline for submitting your STTR form for the classes is 45 days in advance of school.

To Pre-register for the class go to Register page. <http://www.auxpa.org/aux12/register.html>

Shooting Digital Photos For Publication

By Rob Westcott BC-APA

You don't have to be a professional photographer to shoot a good picture for publication. Having a quality camera with you and being alert for a good photo moment goes a long way, especially if the event has enough significance and you are the only photographer.

That said, having a basic understanding of what makes for a good publication photo can allow you to be a valued photo contributor to Auxiliary and Coast Guard publications.

SHOOT WITH THE HIGHEST RESOLUTION POSSIBLE

As a first rule, let me suggest you shoot in the highest resolution possible (jpeg Fine as a minimum). One and two megapixel shots may be fine for family four by sixes, but publications want four or five megapixels or higher if possible.

One reason is that good print quality demands high resolution. Readers expect sharp pictures! And speaking of sharpness be sure your photo is in focus. High resolution pictures that are out of focus are not usable. Several things contribute to focus, not the least of which are camera shake and depth of field. To combat camera shake, always shoot at the highest shutter speed possible, but never less than the reciprocal of the focal length of your lens (i.e. 50mm lens = minimum shutter speed of $1/50^{\text{th}}$ of a second, 200mm lens = $1/200^{\text{th}}$ of a second). Shutter speed and depth of field go hand in hand and require a tradeoff depending on available light. Just remember that the higher the *f* stop, the greater the depth of field. Ansel Adams always shot at *f*64, but then he was photographing fixed landscapes with a tripod mounted camera.

A second reason is that your picture will likely be cropped by the photo editor. Photo editors by effective cropping can turn the ordinary picture into an effective news shot. The more you crop and then change size for publication fit, the more the higher resolution becomes important.

When I was a staff photographer for a large university years ago (in the film era), we were not even allowed to shoot in the 35mm format because our editors wanted the highest resolution possible, and wanted to be able to produce a quality photo from a fraction of our negatives. That's also why our astronauts shot with a Hasselblad 2¼ square format camera on the moon.

WHEN YOU CAN, TAKE LOTS OF SHOTS AND CULL THEM LATER

One of my early mentors in photography was a staff photographer for *National Geographic*, a publication renowned for the quality of its photos and for how *Geographic* photos effectively brought other cultures into our homes.

Martin shared with me that he would literally shoot hundreds of shots to get the handful that would make for a *Geographic* story. Shooting from different angle perspectives, with various focal length lenses, and bracketing for exposure and depth of field control, Martin could get the perfect shots that *Geographic* demanded.

With the advent of digital photography, there is no financial constraint holding us back from shooting quantity in the pursuit of quality.

WHEN FRAMING LEAVE SOME ROOM AROUND YOUR SUBJECT

Here, we get back to editorial cropping again. When you leave room, the editors can do their magic, and they can also make the photo fit. As photographers, we can never be sure how our photos will be used in various publications.

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Shooting Digital Photos for Publications (Continued from Page 5)

DOCUMENT THE CONTENT OF YOUR PHOTOS

For photos to be published in Auxiliary and Coast Guard Publications, they must be documented both for captioning and archiving for future use. When you submit a photo for publication in the Auxiliary, it generally becomes available in the various Coast Guard and Auxiliary Public Affairs venues.

Proper documentation starts with on-scene documentation of the Who, What, When, Where and Why. Accuracy of documentation is essential!

File names for Auxiliary photos must follow the Visual Information Reference Identification (VIRN) standard. A typical filename would be like the following example:

050811-C-9999W-500.jpg

In this example, the first six digits indicate date of shot in two-digit year, month, day sequence (here it shows August 11, 2005). This is followed by a dash and then the letter "C" for Coast Guard. This in turn is followed by another dash and the last four numbers of the photographer's Social Security number and initial of last name. Next is another dash followed by the photo sequence number for the day's shooting. Slides, negatives and prints use sequence numbers 1-499 and digital photos 500-999 (here it is the first digital shot of the day). Finally, the .jpg extension.

A detailed explanation of this naming system can be found on the Auxiliary PA website. As this naming system tells nothing about the content of your picture, this information must be provided in another place in your photo file. While information can be placed in the File Properties part of your file, in the Auxiliary, we use Photoshop and Photoshop Elements for photo editing and management, and therefore with these programs put the information in the File Info part of the photo file. This can be accessed in Photoshop or Elements from the File menu, and allows you to enter Title, Author and a detailed Caption for the photo. If you don't have a photo editing program that supports this, include the caption in your email.

SHOOT PICTURES OF AUXILIARISTS AND AUXILIARY FACILITIES IN ACTION

Auxiliary publications feature Auxiliarists and Auxiliary facilities making a difference. Photos for publication must do the same. As a general rule, a picture of a dignitary at an event may work well for civilian publications, but tells nothing about the contribution of the Auxiliary. On the other hand, a shot of an Auxiliarist IN ACTION is often worth 1000 words.

Action shots include all aspects of Auxiliary activity - an Auxiliary Public Education Instructor in interaction with students, Auxiliary Vessel Examiners checking out a vessel, Auxiliary radio operators on the mike, as well as boat and air crew in action.

Context shots, such as a shot of Alltel Stadium for the Superbowl story can SUPPLEMENT action shots, but should never substitute for them. An Auxiliarist receiving a special award may SUPPLEMENT other photos in a biographical piece, but is no substitute for a picture of the award winner in action.

BEWARE OF CIGARETTES, IMPROPER UNIFORMS, IMPROPER PROCEDURE AND UNFLATTERING SHOTS

While some magic can be technically and ethically done in PhotoShop, a lot of otherwise good photos get trashed by editors because they cast less than a positive light on the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard.

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Shooting Digital Photos for Publications (Continued from Page 6)

A cigarette hanging out of the side of Humphrey Bogart's lip may have been fine for the *African Queen*, but in the mouth of an Auxiliarist it is taboo. Sloppy uniforms may work for the Keystone Cops or Beverly Hills Cops, but not for the Auxiliary. We represent America's Finest, and need to look the part!

Know your Policies and Procedures Manuals, especially the Operations Manual, and make sure your picture subjects are following procedure to the "T" for published pictures.

Also and finally, the Golden Rule of Public Affairs Photography is "Photograph others the way you would like to be photographed." Avoid unflattering shots.

With quality, properly-documented photos, you can make an important contribution to the Auxiliary and Coast Guard.

Good shooting!

NATIONAL DATES FOR A BOATING SAFETY MESSAGE

January

- **Family Fit Lifestyle Month, January 2006.** (Tie-in: paddling safety; don't drink and boat; healthy alternatives to alcohol while boating.)
- **New Year's Day, January 1, 2006.** (Tie-in: "A New Year's resolution you can really keep" – wear your life jacket/take a boating safety course; don't drink and boat; showcase newest PFD styles; reminder: drunk passengers are just as likely to suffer a fatality as drunk operators; what to eat/drink instead of alcohol; cold weather survival; hunting and fishing safety.)
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, January 16, 2006** (observed). See <http://www.mlkday.org/>. (Tie-in: be proactive in outreach to African Americans; depict African-Americans wearing life jackets & enjoying a fun and safe day on the water.)

February

- **Black History Month, February 2006.** (Tie-in: be proactive in outreach to African Americans; depict African-Americans in all boating safety outreach; depict African-Americans wearing life jackets & having a safe and fun time on the water.)
- **National Burn Prevention Week, February 5–11, 2006.** See <http://www.injuryprevention.org/links/links-burn.htm>. (Tie-in: electrical safety in & on the water; get a VSC; survival skills & first aid for burns on the water; take a boating course; "suddenly at the helm" information.)
- **National Child Passenger Safety Week, February 12–18, 2006.** See http://www.safekids.org/state_display.cfm. (Tie-in: buckle up in your car *and* on the water; federal and/or your state's child PFD regulations; importance of wearing life jackets; importance of properly fitting life jackets; how to check for correct fit; PFD fashion show for kids; importance of letting your child "test out" his/her life jacket in the pool first.)
- **St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 2006.** (Tie-in: latest life jacket fashions; a PFD fashion show; "Protect the one you love – wrap your sweetheart in a life jacket!"; boating course gift suggestions.)

REMEMBER: Post your events on NSBC's campaign website: www.safeboatingcampaign.org.

PA TIPS, TACTICS & TECHNIQUES

Division 3 11 NR goes on the air with Local PBS Station

Division 3 11NR came up with a unique way to get coverage on 9/11, a day where the competition for TV exposure is stiff.

What was their approach? They volunteered to serve at their local PBS affiliate (KVIE Sacramento) on their phone bank.

Eighteen members from Division 3 District 11 Norther Region, volunteered to serve on the phone bank on Sunday September 11th, where the feature presentation was *Oklahoma*, a sure crowd pleasure.

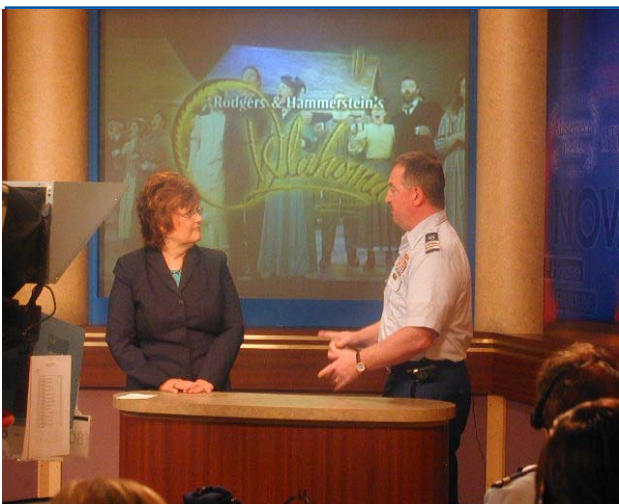


ABOVE: Auxiliarists Vic Lindsay, Leanne Sweeney, Gary McLean and Clyde Queen answering phones. **BELOW LEFT:** Ed Sweeney DC-Ad discussed the USCGAUX with host Susan Miller. **BELOW RIGHT:** Davis Bogue IPDCP and Don Enos DCP look on as Susan Miller introduces Ed Sweeney. (Photos courtesy of KVIE)

“We got some exposure on a medium we often don’t get much exposure on,” said Don Enos, DCP 3 11NR.

Not only did the Auxiliarists get exposure from the cameras panning the studio during the intermissions, but the station did two detailed 5 minute interviews on who the Auxiliary is, what we do, and also gave time to promote our major programs like America’s Waterway Watch and Operation Life Ring.

We recommend that all Auxiliary units try this unique way of getting some face time on their local PBS affiliate.



Do you have a PA Tip, Tactic, or Technique that you want to share that could benefit our Public Affairs efforts across the country?

If so, email Ed Sweeney at DC-Ad@auxpa.org with the subject header “PA Tips, tactics, and Techniques”