



The Public Affairs

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UPDATE

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The Newsletter of The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary National Department of Public Affairs

Who Is A Public Affairs Officer?

(An Ongoing Saga)

As we all know, the FSO-PA is the most sought after job in the Auxiliary. However, not until after begging your Flotilla Commander for the position, do you begin to realize how involved it is and how much fun it can be.

You begin to reflect on the tasks a FSO-PA addresses, a process as involved as contemplating your "bippy" or determining the number of stars between Rylos 7 and Kodan 4. (237,921.6 if you absolutely have to know).

In the broad view, the Public Affairs Officer serves as the spokesperson for their Flotillas and conduct internal, media and community relations programs. To be effective, these programs must have defined goals that specify what is to be accomplished over a specific period of time within a given budget.

These goals do not rain down in neat packages from heaven and only rarely show up in fortune cookies. They require thought and interaction with the other members of the flotilla because their purpose is to publicize the activities and services of the Flotilla, the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard. The PA Officer has to know enough about all of the programs to discuss them intelligently at a high level and know which personnel and resources to call upon when more detail is needed.

Information about these services is available in a publication that is oddly enough titled "United States

Coast Guard Auxiliary Directory Of Services". This publication lists all of the services with a brief description of each and is available for downloading from the AUXWEB. (Hint Hint).

All PA Officers should become familiar with the Auxiliary Public Affairs Manual which gives a good basis as to how the job is done. Other sources of information include a public affairs handbook and a primer on public service announcements—both of which are available on the AUXWEB.

Of course, you are expected to wait with baited breath for each new issue of UPDATE and hang on every word therein. 'Who is a public affairs officer' will be a continuing column that we hope will stimulate you into thinking of new ways to have fun with Public Affairs.

If you have any Ideas that have worked for you or would you like information on a specific item you are invited to contact UPDATE with your request or information at the above e-mail, FAX or mailing address. You can even visit with us here in Las Vegas if you get the chance (we know that most people tend to stay away from stodgy old towns like Vegas but somebody has to live here.)

Boat Shows and Belly Buttons

This is the time of year that boat shows proliferate. There are very large shows with 50, 100 or more vendors showing many types of boats and accessories. There are small shows with 10 or less vendors and limited equipment to see and buy. Some

shows are in large convention centers and others are in marinas or in the hallways of local shopping malls. Each of these shows presents different opportunities for the Auxiliarist to meet people and to further the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and its missions.

Small shows and mall shows have a smaller number of attendees allowing more time to talk one on one. These are good opportunities to "sell" the Auxiliary and its message of safety to the people coming by. These smaller shows tend to exhibit smaller boats which are involved in the preponderance of serious accidents. The mall shows will have a fair amount of traffic not overly interested in boating. However, there may be a lot of fishermen (who do not consider themselves boaters). By tailoring your booth and message to this audience, you may influence the fishermen or casual boaters to wear PFDs and think safety.

The large shows have a completely different flavor. The booth may be located in the entrance way before going into the main show, intermingled with the accessory booths or in some dim corner. In all cases the traffic can be staggering. There will be little time to spend with each person coming to the booth so a bit of planning is required to make each visitor's experience meaningful and positive. Have the right mix of members manning the booth so that most questions can be answered quickly. Organize handouts so they are readily accessible, specific ones can be located fast and explained in few words. Have interest cards and pens available at multiple locations so they can be

filled out quickly. Placing cards throughout the show with a deposit box will also increase responses. Sign up sheets for CMEs at the booth sometimes work better than the cards for making appointments—especially if they are grouped by (local) marinas.

Find the belly buttons at these shows, both big and small. These are the show managers and the “boss” exhibitors. You may be located in some back woods out of the way place at the show. The right belly button will allow you to place signs with various messages (and the location of the booth) at several places throughout the show. The exhibitors will normally display the Auxiliary “Marine Dealer” information at their booths, but find the right belly button and they will put together a display of the equipment required for the CME (until May 1, 2000 when the name will be changed to Vessel Safety Check or VSC).

A dealer may be willing to sell a CME/VSC package with their boats and then arrange with your FSO-VE to do an inspection at the time of delivery. Remember, the larger vessels usually come with all the required equipment and represent a smaller percentage of accidents so don't forget the smaller boats.

An exhibitor with a very large display may even let the Flotilla use some space as a satellite booth with someone manning it. The large vessel displays generally have long lines with people waiting to board. These lines do not move fast and, if the dealer permits, you could have a captive audience.

Be creative and many new ways of reaching people will surface.

Always remember, when working a show, you represent the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. You should be neat and clean and not use your uniform as a free pass for the show.

The belly buttons are interested in working with the Auxiliary to further boating safety. They believe educating the boater will reduce accidents and/or reduce their severity.

Meeting people and talking about a subject you love is fun.

EAST SIDE WEST SIDE

And Everywhere In-Between

This is going to be an exciting year for boating and for the Auxiliary and, of course for the PA officers. You wonder why? Glad you asked.

The east coast will be awash with activity starting with OPSAIL-2000 in New York harbor and extending up and down the coast. Sail and Power boats alike will show the Auxiliary colors on the “big green pond”, the inter-costal (Pongo Ferry is a happening place) and inland waters.

Project 2000, a personal watercraft extravaganza starts the festivities in Southern California, Southern Nevada and Arizona. People will bring their own PWCs to Lake Mead (hope they don't go over the dam), Lake Mohave, Laughlin/Bullhead City, Lake Havasu (where the London Bridge resides), Mission Bay, Lake Perris and Cabrillo Beach. After an 8 point pre launch safety inspection, they will get a check-off list to use at subsequent launches. There will be test rides and a safety tent showing rules of the road, current laws and local rules.

PA Officers should plan their advertising campaigns early and get the words out. They should also work with the other Flotilla Officers and possibly plan some games, activities and possibly a bar-b-q.

Remember to take a lot of photographs and videos. We can use them now and into the future. Also, try to avoid the posed shot of our members standing in front of or leaning on their boats, or of Auxiliarists sitting down at a hearty meal. Try to get good action shots when underway or working at the docks. Send copies of the photos and videos to the National PA Staff. The best photos may be used in the navigator and will also be considered for the Coast Guard Imaging system.

Let us know what is happening in your area and we will get the word out.

Boat Smart From The Start

WEAR YOUR LIFEJACKET

National Safe Boating Week starts 20 May and, although the week is over 26 May, due to extreme interest, this year it will last the whole year in the guise of the **North American Safe Boating Campaign 2000**. This year Canada will participate in the event giving it a somewhat international flavor.

This campaign is the Public Affairs Officer's golden opportunity to show and to sell the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary's mission of safe boating to the public.

Start planning now. How do you generate publicity by using the media? What services of the Auxiliary do you want to publicize? Who in your Flotilla do you want to enlist to help? Seems like a lot of questions but help is on the horizon. Campaign kits are due to reach the DSOs-PA this month. Make sure you get your information from your DSO-PA or SO-PA as soon as possible (bug them) and then order the supplies you plan on using (again ASAP).

Plan a campaign of public service announcements to be released at intervals and provide them to your local radio and television stations. Signs in local store windows also work well. Need some ideas or help? Your DSO-PA has some video spots and sample announcements. If you have a computer on the web, check the National Safe Boating Council's web site (www.safeboatingcampaign.com boy, is that a mouth full) or at the PA Department AUXWEB Site.

Make sure the announcements are relevant to things that are happening or are about to happen in concert with public or Auxiliary functions. And remember—HAVE FUN.

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