



Gene M. Seibert, National Commodore

SUBJECT:

Recruiting

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From the National Commodore

This edition of On Course continues a series of occasional articles written by the program experts – the National Staff who develop and oversee existing and emerging new programs. During 2006, the Coast Guard Auxiliary will place an extensive focus on four important and specific areas. They are:

- Our ability to balance our missions against our resources
- To revitalize and re-emphasize the importance of RBS
- **To concentrate on recruitment and retention**
- To concentrate on our planning convergence with the Coast Guard

The Personnel Touch

By Gregg L. Trask, DC-P

Department Chief, Personnel

Members are Our Lifblood:

Our members are the lifblood of our Auxiliary. In all of our programs, our members are the key element. Because of the quality and dedication of our membership we continue to be the premier volunteer organization in our nation.

To thrive, we must continually be looking to recruit quality people. This is called recruiting and recruiting is something that each of us should count as a personal core mission. April Membership Drive:

With our April Membership Drive on the horizon, now is a good opportunity to decide how you want to participate in this nationwide initiative. Several districts have reported activities including coordinated VSC ramp recruiting, marina blitzes, open houses and community group

recruiting presentations. Plans are underway to help meet the nationwide goal of 1,000 new members in the month of April.

The National Personnel Department invites you to visit their web site — www.auxpdept.org — for information and assistance in developing your plans to participate. Here you will find a toolkit that includes various posters, want ads, prospective member take-away forms and other items that will provide a start for your own personalized program.

At www.auxpdept.org you will also find a PowerPoint presentation that describes the benefits of being a member. Entitled “We’re Just Like You,” this presentation is great for use at events as diverse as boat shows or scheduled presentations.

Recruiting Ideas:

During N-Train at St Louis, the District Staff Officers for Personnel Services met to discuss what works best for recruiting new members. The DSO’s concluded that one of our most effective recruiting techniques is personal contact by existing members speaking with their friends and acquaintances. This peer-to-peer contact provides a prospective member with a unique and personal visibility into the opportunities Auxiliary membership can offer. Time and again, this method was heralded as the best way to grow the membership.

Taking a lesson from this, we want to create opportunities where we can tell people about the Auxiliary on a personal basis. We have traditionally used boat shows and Public Education classes with success. While these activities will continue, we must explore other creative opportunities.

“Every member of our organization, from the National Commodore to the new member, is a member of a flotilla first... and most joined because someone asked.”

For example, community groups such as Kiwanis and Rotary invite outside organizations, such as the Auxiliary, to their meetings. An Auxiliarist speaking at one of these meetings can generate Auxiliary membership interest and that interest can carry beyond the immediate group to families and friends. Like dropping a pebble in a pond, the ripples may reach far.

Another creative recruiting activity may be an open house. Hosting an open house at your flotilla can be a great way to start a personal relationship with folks interested in becoming members. Consider having several members present (perhaps in various uniforms) who are willing to meet new people and talk to them about the Auxiliary story. The “We’re Just Like You” PowerPoint presentation can be put to good use here but you should augment this with your own local pictures, stories and flavor.

Whatever you decide works best to recruit members, remember that we have a wide variety of help available to assist your program. A good first place to stop is the P Departments web-site. Remember to check with your own Personnel Services (PS) chain as well. It's also a good idea to look at what works well in other units similar to yours and adapt those programs for your own.

Reach out to your Public Affairs (PA) and Communications Services (CS) colleagues to assist you with your recruiting program. Use their expertise and contacts to generate new ideas, techniques and venues for recruiting.

Recruiting Skills:

Recruiting is a primary flotilla mission as well as an individual member mission. District, Division and National can provide support and assistance but the organization grows at the flotilla level. Every member of our organization, from the National Commodore to the new member, is a member of a flotilla first... and most joined because someone asked.

Our close working relationship with the United States Coast Guard makes the Coast Guard Auxiliary a unique organization. It's this relationship that allows us to wear the uniform and work shoulder to shoulder in missions that save lives. From patrols to radio watches and from the water to the office, Auxiliarists serve proudly alongside their active duty and reserve counterparts.

Within the Auxiliary specific missions in RBS, such as public education and vessel examination, we are looked upon as the national leaders. These missions all have one thing in common. Each requires a quality person – a trained and qualified member – to perform them.

There are many people interested in joining the Auxiliary. Some reach out to us and ask for assistance in joining us. Others are interested but shy about asking. These potential members are looking for a way to be invited to join. In either case, it is our responsibility to help them reach their goal of becoming an Auxiliary member.

The Art of Recruiting:

Recruiting is part skill and part art. Effective recruiting relies on members who are communicative, personable and friendly; people who are genuinely interested in sharing the Auxiliary with others; people who understand what the Auxiliary can offer and are excited to tell others about it; people who like people and enjoy being around them.

Membership is all about people and relationships. Members, through personal contact, help a prospective member see the opportunities – and fun – in becoming a member of our organization.