ELBERT, Colo. — A cool, crisp, tranquil morning on Sep. 19 quickly evolved into the laughter of young children. The Denver Area Council hosted its 2015 Council Camporee at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch, in Elbert, Colo., the largest Boy Scout camporee west of the Mississippi River in 2015. It also marked the 50th Anniversary of Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch, which opened in 1965.

Auxiliarist Amy McNeil has been a registered volunteer leader in Denver Area Council for 20 years. When she joined the Auxiliary, McNeil brought extensive Scouting knowledge and leadership with her. McNeil was on Boy Scouts of America (BSA) staff at the 2010 National Scout Jamboree, where she met Auxiliarists who shared their experiences. Upon her return home, she promptly joined. During her four years of service in the Auxiliary, McNeil has concentrated her efforts toward creating a strong relationship with the local BSA council and building upon that foundation each year. McNeil serves as both Division 1 and Flotilla 4’s BSA/CGAUX liaison. She serves as a representative on the Auxiliary on the Aquatics Committee, making sure safe boating educational opportunities are available for each age group in Scouting.

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Colorado has large National Guard, Army and Air Force representation at scouting events. The Coast Guard has a much smaller presence, and each time the Coast Guard Auxiliary participates in Scouting events, youth and adults inevitably stop by and ask questions. Those questions always lead us toward discussing the importance of recreational boating safety.

The Cub Scout program was recently rewritten and the new handbooks were released for scouts to begin working on the new program June 1. The new program has a greater emphasis on water safety. Appropriate life jacket selection and wear is specifically emphasized at the Cub Scout age level where good habits begin.

Tiger Scouts through Webelos Scouts began arriving at the Coast Guard Auxiliary tent to work on their qualifications skills. With line in hand, they began deftly weaving the intricacies of that old standard “square knot.” From there they moved to donning properly fitted life vests, and practiced casting the throwable flotation aids.

The Saturday night events included onstage appearances by a 17-year-old Eagle Scout, Matt Moniz - who was attempting to summit Mount Everest when the Nepal earthquake sent an avalanche down into his camp - and world renowned blind mountain climber Erik Weydenmayer. The scouts also attained a new Guinness World Record for “Bubble Wrap popping” by 2,600 scouts.

Perhaps the most alluring attraction for the scouts was the orange bucket of fruity Lifesavers set out on the Auxiliary table offered to the scouts with “You Are What You Eat” as a subtle salute to “America’s Volunteer Lifesavers”

It was a wonderful day, doing what we do on behalf of the Coast Guard in Colorado. We are proactively teaching our children about boating safety. Auxiliarists Amy McNeil, Jeffrey Geddes, Patrick Malone, Ellie Watson, Frank Merrill and Patrick Hickey are already looking forward to working with the youth who will be leading our country in the future, and helping them to “be prepared.”

Auxiliarist Jeffrey Geddes provides boating safety resource information during the event.
Coastie was the center of attention during the Coast Guard festival where thousands of kids and parents learned about and paid tribute to the United States Coast Guard. Getting them to wear a life jacket at an early age will hopefully set an impression that PFDs are cool! Here, Lady, a certified therapy dog, seems to make a connection with Coastie.

GRAND HAVEN, Mich. – What do several thousand kids and Coastie have in common? Lots of fun! During the U.S. Coast Guard festival each year, the schedule includes a special day set aside just for kids. Members from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in Grand Haven and Holland, Michigan, brought Coastie to the event and set up a special area where Coastie could mix with the kids, drawing them in with its animation and sounds. Coastie is a fully animatronic robot that moves, speaks, listens and activates its lights and horns all by remote control. It can wink, blink and move his eyes, which presents a friendly image to young and old alike. Coastie has navigation and searchlights, a rotating beacon, a siren, an air horn and eyes with eyelids.

The festival hosts Kids’ Day at Mulligan’s Hollow, just across the street from USCG Station Grand Haven and up the hill from the USCG District Nine Sector Field Office. Here kids get to experience everything from trying to repair a leaky boat, to a walk-through of a fire safety trailer, and even beating on different kinds of drums. Coastie fit right in and drew the attention of kids of all ages. They received help in correctly donning their life jackets and then got up close and personal with Coastie. Coastie operators Hank and Sarah Dinkelmann, from the Holland flotilla, kept the kids’ attention and amazed them with its movement, sounds and flashing lights. They wondered how this little boat could talk back to them. Even the dogs got in the act. Mary Jane Brunner, a volunteer from Grand Haven public safety, brought Lady, a certified therapy dog, to

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the event. Lady is one lucky dog. She was rescued from a shelter and now assists Mary Jane in public safety affairs. Al Kracker, from the Grand Haven flotilla, coordinated the Coastie appearance at Kid’s Day and made sure that any photos taken of children had their parent’s permission. Kracker stated, “Parents were excited that their children got to try on life jackets and talk with Coastie.” Grand Haven is home to thousands of boaters and educating them on boating safety is a primary objective of the USCG Auxiliary. The message got through with these young people that “Life jackets float, you don’t.” Kracker anticipates that next year’s event will be just as much fun for everyone.
Honoring A Devotion To Duty

Half a world away, and half a century ago, a young man was serving his country.

The story begins with young Uwe Grapengeter, who was born Nov. 22, 1925, in Hamburg, Germany. His father immigrated to the United States in 1927 and settled in Elizabeth, New Jersey. In June 1944, Grapengeter enlisted in the United States Army to serve his nation during World War II.

Fast forward to 2014, and Grapengeter is a member of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and meets Steve Liddy who, in addition to being a fellow Auxiliarist, is a Colonel in the United States Air Force.

During a casual conversation at a flotilla meeting, Liddy became determined to research the war records, believing Grapengeter might be missing some service awards. Grapengeter had served in General Patton’s 3rd Army at the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line through the duration of the war, to May 1945. Liddy took direct action on behalf of a veteran, a shipmate and a friend.


However, the story doesn’t end here.

Although it took a little more time, the French government also felt Grapengeter’s service was worthy of their recognition. On Nov. 9, 2015, a formal presentation was conducted on behalf of the French government at the Denver capital. Grapengeter was awarded the Chevalier dans l’Ordre National de la Légion d’Honneur. This medal represents the highest award given by the French government.

Our country is fortunate to have citizens such as Grapengeter, and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is privileged to count him as a member of our organization. He truly represents the core ideals of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty.
AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico - The Coast Guard recognized Auxiliary aviators (AUXAIR) assigned to Air Station Borinquen (BQN) during the annual Auxiliary Aviation Safety Workshop held at BQN, Nov. 7, 2015.

Coast Guard Lt. Crystal A. Barnett, BQN Auxiliary liaison officer announced the awards as Capt. Patricia A. McFetridge, BQN commanding officer presented the Auxiliary Medal of Operational Merit, Auxiliary Achievement Medal and the Special Operations Service Ribbon to Auxiliary pilots, crew and observers.

“We have the premier AUXAIR program in the Coast Guard Auxiliary,” said McFetridge during opening remarks. The two-day annual Aviation Safety Workshop is a time for AUXAIR, active duty Coast Guard, partners and trainees to focus on member competencies, new and innovative technology, qualification skills, equipment testing, and planning and procedures. Auxiliary aviators assigned to BQN are part of the Coast Guard Seventh District Auxiliary aviation program, which includes air stations Clearwater, Miami and Savannah. Each year the air stations hold a separate required workshop within their area of responsibility.

“I am incredibly impressed,” stated Barnett as she called upon the recipients of the awards. Recipients of the Auxiliary Medal of Operational Merit were:

José G. Berrios. He was cited for outstanding operational skill and achievement while serving as Co-pilot. Upon completion of his crew’s assigned first light search pattern for two missing paddle boarders and with minimal fuel available to remain on scene, the resourceful and experienced crew determined that they had just enough fuel to fly one pass over a small island and prominent landmark that survivors might paddle towards if they were blown off shore. During their pass, Berrios spotted a person on a steep ridge, nearly invisible in the scrub brush and cacti, waving excitedly at the aircraft. The crew immediately confirmed that he was one of the two missing paddle boarders. After alerting the Coast

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Guard Sector to their discovery, they made several more passes around the island to plot an exact position for an inbound MH-65D helicopter and assured the survivor that help was on the way. Had it not been for Mr. Berrios’ keen eye and the reasoning of the crew, the survivor surely would have succumbed to the elements while rescue crews searched for him 10 miles to the east of where he was located. He had drifted for nearly three days without food, water and adequate shelter before reaching the island and would most certainly have died of exposure. The second paddle boarder was never found.

A second Auxiliary Medal of Operational Merit was also presented to Berrios. He was cited for outstanding operational skill and achievement while serving as a co-pilot when conducting a search pattern for an overdue sailing vessel. Demonstrating exceptional resourcefulness and dedication to mission, Berrios personally contacted the missing vessel’s homeport and learned the vessel was under the command of a very experienced sailor. Using his own extensive knowledge of sailing and of recent weather conditions, Berrios created an updated track line and requested the search area be modified. An expedited search of this new track line rationed the minimal daylight remaining. Berrios’ unit was able to locate the vessel. Berrios’ outstanding maritime skills, dedication, and initiative were instrumental in the rapid location of the vessel, and saved the Coast Guard over $100,000 by standing down an HC-130 aircraft preparing to depart from Air Station Clearwater. Berrios’ proficiency in interpreting on scene conditions combined with his own extensive nautical knowledge enabled him to make bold and concise recommendations, which drove a major tactical adjustment in the search effort.

Pedro Cortes-Gonzalez. He was cited for outstanding operational skill and achievement while serving as aerial observer. During a routine patrol, Cortes-Gonzalez observed a small rectangular object floating in the water. After Coast Guard sector requested photographs of the object, he maintained visual contact and directed the aircraft commander into position, ensuring the best possible imagery, which positively identified it as bales of contraband. Sector diverted a Coast Guard cutter to the coordinates given by the Auxiliary crew, who assisted in vectoring the cutter to the position. Despite high seas and deteriorating daylight, Cortes-Gonzalez was able to maintain a visual sighting of the contraband until the Coast Guard cutter successfully recovered the bales of contraband weighing 500 pounds.

Glauco A. Rivera. He was cited for outstanding operational skill and achievement while serving as aircraft commander. While conducting a routine patrol, his observer spotted a vessel in prohibited waters. Determining that the vessel was likely engaged in illegal fishing, Rivera immediately descended to obtain a better visual of the vessel. He communicated with a Coast Guard cutter providing critical information on the vessel’s course and speed. Based on the information he provided, a local law enforcement vessel was able to intercept and apprehend the crew. A search of the vessel yielded an astounding 15 illegally harvested lobsters and 180 shelled conchs hidden onboard. Due to Rivera’s sound professional judgment and flawless mission execution, the case remains one of Coast Guard AUXAIR’s largest fishery seizures.

The Auxiliary Achievement Medal was also awarded to Rivera. He was cited for superior performance of duty while serving as Assistant Auxiliary aviation coordinator for Personal Protective Equipment at BQN. During his tenure, Rivera’s inspirational leadership style and meticulous administrative skill guided analysis of equipment
PORTLAND, Maine – Several Auxiliarists from Division 2, District 1 Northern Region in Portland, Maine, are currently training to become qualified Auxiliary assistant container inspectors (AUX/EC).

A need for more inspectors arose in 2013 when Eimskip, a major Icelandic shipping company, moved their headquarters from Norfolk, Virginia, to the International Marine Terminal in Portland. The number of containers at the terminal nearly doubled from 3,381 in 2013 to more than 7,000 in 2015. The container ships arrive directly from Iceland and Europe.

A strict protocol is adhered to when inspecting the containers. When the container ship arrives at the terminal in Portland the Coast Guard selects several random containers for inspection, which are placed in a separate area away from the ship.

To have access to the Terminal the Auxiliarist must show proper identification and have required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as hard hats, gloves, eye protection and reflective safety vests. The Auxiliarist will first look at the placards on the container and use the shipping papers to confirm they have been correctly marked according to their country of origin. Then a walk-around of the container is done to note any leakage of possibly hazardous materials from the container. The inspector will also closely check for any structural damage that the container may have incurred during shipment. If any deficiencies are found, the Yard Manager and Customs will be notified.

Caution is used when opening the container doors. A


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safety strap is attached across the container’s doors prior to opening the container. The right hand door is then opened six to seven inches and a gas meter is placed inside to determine if the concentration of any gas inside is hazardous. When confirmed that the gas level inside the container is not hazardous, a second inspector will stand at the left of the door and determine that the cargo in the container has not shifted during transit, which could cause a safety hazard when opening both doors fully. After the container doors have been opened fully, the container is allowed to air out to eliminate any possibility of sickening the inspectors. Once these precautions have been completed, the Coast Guard inspector may enter the container no more than three feet. Because containers are considered a confined space, the inspector will not proceed further into the container.

The above is just a brief description of the protocol followed when a container is inspected. To obtain the qualification of Auxiliary assistant container inspector an Auxiliarist must learn about the shipping regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as well as the International Dangerous Goods (IMDG) codes, Department of Transportation (DOT) charts and Emergency Response Guidebook, to name a few.

AUX/EC is another interesting and exciting option Auxiliarists have to become involved in the Marine Safety Program.

needs, timely procurement, and critical inspection of PPE for more than 50 Auxiliary members. Rivera created a comprehensive inventory of equipment and implemented a system of accountability based on inspection and expiration dates, which drove procurement, budgeting and inspection schedules. He planned and coordinated the air station’s first “Vest Fest,” a joint active duty and Auxiliary inspection-training event in which all AUXAIR members’ survival equipment were inspected and returned to service. This resulted in 100 percent readiness for the unit throughout the year. Anticipating future requirements, Rivera drafted a two-year forward-looking budget and procured over $30,000 of equipment in support of AUXAIR. He expertly managed safety equipment after delivery and ensured efficient distribution to facilities throughout the air station’s area of operation, encompassing over 125,000 square miles with major airports on three widely separated islands.

The Special Operations Service Ribbon was awarded to members for participation with Operation Unified Resolve. Operation Unified Resolve commenced a targeted campaign to deter, detect and disrupt illegal maritime activities in the region and is now the standing regional framework for interagency maritime operations supporting Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This innovative joint operations overcame numerous barriers, greatly improved cooperation at all levels, and resulted in significant operational efficiency and a dramatic increase in effectiveness.

Additional awards recognized members for achieving levels of over 30, 100 and 250 flight hours.
The Lighthouse Room at Coast Guard Base Los Angeles-Long Beach was transformed into a well-equipped, air conditioned, training environment for 26 members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary late last year. This team of Auxiliary members came from five different states, completing a two-day 16-hour intensive public affairs training workshop in November of 2015.

Chief Petty Officer Michael A. Anderson and Petty Officer 1st Class Gina Ruoti, Coast Guard Reserve public affairs specialists, partnered with Commodore Bert Blanchette, district commodore, Coast Guard Auxiliary District Eleven Southern Region and Commodore Harry Jacobs, director, Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Affairs Directorate, to create the training program.

The training program consists of active participants being trained on topics that include the application of public affairs programs, Coast Guard public affairs policy, journalism, digital photography, interview techniques, media relations, and the release of information guidelines and photos. Part of the training also includes national incident command structures, joint information center operations and active duty rates and ranks training.

After the successful completion of classroom lectures and oral quizzes, approved participants are given qualifications in all three levels of the standard Coast Guard Auxiliary public affairs specialist’s prerequisites. The three levels include Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist 3 (AUXPA3), Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist 2 (AUXPA2), and Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist 1 (AUXPA1).

Lourdes Oliveras, branch chief, Coast Guard Auxiliary Professional Standards Division, then schedules qualified candidates for an official oral board.

Oral boards normally consist of three senior Auxiliary
public affairs specialists that conduct questioning for approximately 45 minutes, then an evaluation of the candidate for approximately 15 minutes.

All candidates receive immediate feedback on their interviews. Successful candidates receive an e-mail confirmation of their new qualification within 72 hours. Unsuccessful candidates are invited to reschedule another board after 30 days of additional review.

“I’m truly grateful for the Auxiliary public affairs support, especially during the Manhattan Beach oil spill incident,” said Anderson. “The Santa Barbara oil spill was the focus of the majority of our public affairs resources in the area. Trained auxiliary public affairs specialists were an amazing force multiplier for the Manhattan Beach Joint Information Center, and they could be an asset for other Coast Guard responses.”

Blanchette recalled that during the 2014 semi-annual Flag Conference, Rear Adm. Joseph Servidio, commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District, informed Auxiliary District Commodores that the active Coast Guard component may need more support and augmentation from the auxiliary in food service, air operations, boat operations, marine safety, public affairs and administrative-technical support if Congress continued to cut the agency budgets.

“The cadre of trained public affairs specialists in District 11 will be substantially increased once these members have completed the qualification process,” said Blanchette.

The Casey E. Purvis And Robert S. Fuller Aviation Award Of Excellence

This award recognizes the pilot (aircraft commander, first pilot or co-pilot) and air crew/observer who have accumulated the most aviation program flight hours in a calendar year. Pilot hours must be non-mishap hours; Air Crew/Observer hours are the total hours by an air crew member while serving as an Air Observer. The awards honor the memory of Auxiliary aviation program members Casey E. Purvis and Robert S. Fuller, who lost their lives on Feb. 1, 2001, while flying a training mission with the Coast Guard. Both Auxiliarists made great contributions to the program in terms of time and dedication.

Kenneth Plesser, District 7 staff officer of aviation, left, and Commodore Mark Simoni, right, national commodore, presented Charles “Chuck” Fischer, Auxiliary aircraft commander and Duane Minton, Auxiliary aircrew Air Station Borinquen, the Casey E. Purvis and Robert S. Fuller Aviation Award of Excellence during the Seventh District board meeting and training conference held in Orlando Sep. 18, 2015.
I think the best thing about the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is the people. I enjoy doing vessel examinations, operations, teaching and my leadership duties, but the best thing is the people. The ones that have become my closest friends, the ones I admire and look up to, the many I have met at meetings and events and even the ones that sometime drive me nuts. I am proud to be part of Team Coast Guard. I am proud to be part of the Coast Guard family. The commandant, when speaking about the Coast Guard refers to its 80,000 plus members. This includes the 30,000-plus Auxiliarists. We are part of something bigger than just the Auxiliary. We are Team Coast Guard.

The significance of this became very apparent to me in the last week. On Sept. 3, 2015, there was an AuxAir mishap in District 1 SR. An AuxAir Facility lost its engine over the Hudson River and made an emergency landing in a field in New Jersey. The AuxAir crew survived but suffered serious injuries. Within minutes of the crash I received a call from Cmdr. Laura Moose, director of the Auxiliary for District 1 SR. The Commander informed me that she was on the way to the hospital to check on the crew and to support the families. Honestly, I was somewhat surprised. I responded, “You are going to the hospital? Now?” She said, “Of course I am” rather emphatically. “That is what we do when one of ours is injured.” I started to understand what being a member of the Coast Guard Family really meant.

That night Moose and Gus Formato, district chief of staff were at the hospital till almost 4 a.m. Auxiliarist Steve Trupkin drove over 50 miles and stayed till after 1 a.m. Moose was there the next day and the next along with visits from Capt. Michael Day, Sector New York commander, active duty from Air Station Cape Cod and many auxiliarists. In the week that followed I have been amazed at the lengths that the Active Duty and the Auxiliary have gone to in order to help the crew and their families. All hands are on deck, active duty members from Boston, Cape Cod, New York, headquarters in Washington, D.C., and Auxiliarists across the country are all working to insure that the crew and the families get what they need. The air crew and their families are being treated like family.

In my world talk is cheap. People say a lot of things but, when push comes to shove all too often no one is there to follow up. In this case the people are there and are there big time. Active duty and the Auxiliary have been and will be there for our injured crew mates and their families. It’s the people.

I spoke with the pilot about the incident and he related that when he lost the engine he considered landing in the Hudson River but saw a field that looked like a better alternative. He headed for the field and was committed to land when he realized it was full of children. He stated he could have made a good landing, typical pilot, but that he wouldn’t be able to live with himself if he hurt a child, so he veered off into the trees. He saved the children, almost at the cost of his own life. That’s the kind of people we have in the Auxiliary. It’s the people.
**MANDATED TRAINING 2016 AND BEYOND**

Mandated Training must be completed by 01 Jan 2017 (and earlier in order to qualify for certain activities and events). Visit the Mandated Training website at [http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=T-DEPT&category=auxmt](http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=T-DEPT&category=auxmt) then click on the “AUXMT FAQ” for 2016 information.

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**DISNEY RELEASES THE FINEST HOURS**

Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty, Coast Guard core values, are all on display in Disney’s film The Finest Hours. The film, which opened 29 January, tells the story of the greatest single small boat rescue in Coast Guard history. It is a story that everyone in Team Coast Guard can take pride in.

Actual photos from the rescue of the 32 crew members of the PENDLETON on Feb. 18, 1952, and Boatswain’s Mate First Class Bernard Webber.

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[http://cgaux.org/members/wantads/](http://cgaux.org/members/wantads/)

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