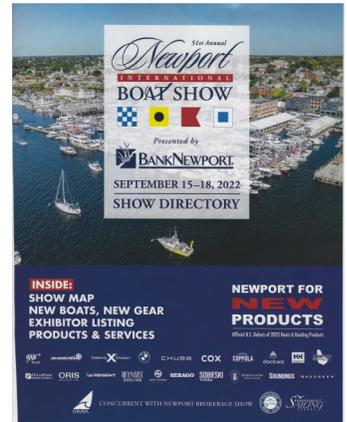




Public Affairs Is So Rewarding!

By Rona Trachtenberg, FSD-PA, FL-65

I just got home from my four-hour Watchstander shift at our PA table in the 2022 Newport International Boat Show. I am still tingling from the adrenaline of doing one of my favorite Public Affairs missions – boat shows! To be fair, I also enjoy three other Auxiliary missions: marching in parades, performing Color Guard, and being a Lighthouse Watchstander.



This particular PA mission was organized by Charles Jenison, FC of Flotilla 7-6, SSNE ADSO-OP. The Division chose Mr. Jenison as PA Event Coordinator as he was already on-site running Newport Yacht Charters. Once I received the invite to participate, I chose my shift - Saturday from 1400 to 1800. The roster listed me as the only Auxiliarist at that time, not a problem as I am used to working solo on these missions.

Even though I was a last-minute respondent for Watchstander, I would like to thank Mr. Jenison for having my credentials ready at the ticket pick-up window, making my entry into the boat show easier and quicker.

When I arrived at our cubicle, I saw that it well-staffed with five Auxiliarists from different flotillas and divisions. At the shift change, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that three Auxiliarists were staying, giving us four Auxiliarists for our small PA cubicle. As I learned in Aux-12 PA C-School, I stood in front of the table to interact with the boat show attendees, and we had plenty of room.



Photo by Glenn L. Perdereaux, FL 7-8. Pictured left to right: Rona Trachtenberg, FL 6-5, Mike Nadeau, CDR Div. 10, & Ed Tavares, IPFC FL 10-2.

An important perk of participating in Public Affairs in a different AOR is meeting and interacting with Auxiliarists from other flotillas. During this mission, I had the pleasure of serving with and learning from Mike Nadeau, Commander of Division 10, Ed Tavares, IPFC of FL 10-2, and Glenn L. Perdereaux, a relatively new member of FL 7-8. The camaraderie was great, and Mike summed up the feeling of unity by saying, "We are all one team!"

In that spirit, I asked Glenn, who volunteered for nearly every PA shift of this boat show, if he wanted to take the Public Affairs Aux-12 C-School course to learn more about our mission. He was eager to do so and I provided him with a contact person for the 2023 schedule!

As a PA Staff Officer, I am fastidious about how I organize the safe boating literature on my table. I was impressed with the set-up I saw when I arrived. One item was particularly interesting and useful: four laminated QR cards, held together with a closure and a lanyard advertised Boating Safety Classes, Vessel Safety Checks, and the Coast Guard App (for Android and for Apple). When a boat show attendee asked about these missions, we invited them to capture that specific QR code on their smart phone, and then they would be able to see all the pertinent information. I think all PA staff, nationwide, would benefit from this useful technology tool - I intend to pursue this for our Flotilla 6-5.



During my four-hour shift, I had several surprises: a gentleman came by who had just purchased a boat, whose motor was being repaired at Bayline Marine in New Bedford. He was eager to take a local basic boating class. Fortunately, I had a picture of our BS&S flyer in my phone. He was thrilled that a class was being offered in his town and promised to register for the class. He also indicated that he might want to join the Auxiliary.

My next surprise was when a new FL-65 member, dressed in ODUs, came up to our PA table and introduced herself as Reda. She needed information on where to get the cloth nametag labels and collar insignias for her uniform. I helped her with that information and then she volunteered to help with our Sea Scout Ship #1930. I truly appreciate these coincidences! You never know who will be walking up to the PA exhibit during these missions.

Last, but not least, a mother stopped by and inquired about sailing courses for her 16-year-old son, who



was already skippering large sailboats and was considering a career in marine engine repair. Fortunately, the boat show organizers placed our Auxiliary PA exhibit right next to the Coast Guard recruiter exhibit. I walked the mom and son over to the two knowledgeable women and made introductions. I listened to the informative explanation of how one becomes a Coastie, how the son's skills would benefit the Coast Guard, and how the Coast Guard education

would benefit the son. The family was impressed. They left with literature, a free gift, and a promise to contact the recruiters with any other questions they may have in the future.

All in all, the four hours flew by quickly! I shared valuable safe boating information with many attendees, made new Auxiliary friends, learned several new things, made important contacts, and ended my shift believing that I made a positive difference in the lives of those people I encountered. If any of you are interested in learning about the rewarding benefits of becoming a Public Affairs Watchstander, please feel free to contact me at ladywriter45@aol.com.