

# Do Something You'll Love

## Join the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

BY DISTRICT CHIEF OF STAFF, VINCENT PICA



Many school-age children dream of being fire fighters or police officers to serve their country. As adults, we understand that there are many ways to serve community and country. On September 11, 2001, the unthinkable suddenly became thinkable and like many others, I was spurred to action, thinking about ways to protect my family and nation.

When I asked myself, "What do I love?" the sea sprang to mind. So I turned to the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, an integral part of the United States Coast Guard Forces, established in 1939 to assist the U.S. Coast Guard in promoting boating safety. Today's Auxiliary plays a larger role, with greater responsibilities than at any other time in its history. It boasts more than 32,000 members from all walks of life who receive special training to be a functional part of U.S. Coast Guard Forces.

Auxiliarists are at the helm of marine safety and security patrols, serve as foreign language interpreters, and educate the public on boating safety. In 2009, Long Islanders volunteered over 120,000 hours; over 14,000 of those hours were spent patrolling L.I. waters in their own vessels (certified to U.S.C.G. operational standards), and another 6,700 were expended in direct operational support of the active-duty corps, such as manning radio stations, working on vessels or making mechanical repairs to the fleet.



There couldn't be a better time than now to join. However, some people have questions about whether the U.S.C.G. Auxiliary is the right fit for them. Among the questions I've heard and answered are:

### DO YOU NEED A BOAT TO JOIN?

Absolutely not! We'll train you to become a certified crewmember. However, if you have a boat and want to get it certified as an "Operational Facility," one day you could find yourself leading a patrol as coxswain on the deck of your own vessel, with a crew under your responsibility.

### DO YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO SWIM TO JOIN?

No again! There are many jobs within the U.S.C.G. Auxiliary that are wholly land-based, such as public education, public affairs, radio watch standing at a Coast Guard station, or being a mechanic at the motor pool.



### ARE THERE SOCIAL ASPECTS TO JOINING UP?

Yes! The United States Coast Guard stands on four "Cornerstones", one being "Fellowship." Beyond the conferences and dinners, the composition of the U.S.C.G. Auxiliary on Long Island speaks volumes about "sea birds of a feather flocking together." About one-third of us are former armed service veterans, allowing us to mingle and exchange war stories.

Over one-quarter of us are bound together by blood and bands of matrimony. Proving that the family that boats together does indeed stay together, members of the U.S.C.G. Auxiliary come in all familial configurations, such as husbands and wives, and parents and children. When my son and I were putting to sea sometime this past summer on our Operational Facility (251384), he turned to me and said, "Dad, I'm glad we have this together." ⚓

Shown in Photos:

- 1 Left to Right: Joseph Gangai, USCG Auxiliarist, Helmsman; Vincent Pica, USCG Auxiliarist, Coxswain
- 2 Left to Right: Antonio Capocetta, USCG active-duty, Boatswain Mate-3, Search & Rescue Detachment; Joseph Carson, USCG active-duty, Mechanic-3, Search & Research Detachment; Christopher Crociata, USCG active-duty, Boatswain Mate-3, Search & Rescue Detachment; George Nelson, USCG Auxiliarist, Helmsman; Anthony Ruiz, USCG Auxiliarist, Crewman/Radio Specialist; Vincent Pica, USCG Auxiliarist, Coxswain
- 3 Left to Right: Rudolph Pica, USCG Auxiliarist, Crewman; Vincent Pica, USCG Auxiliarist, Coxswain; Gregory T. Sarafin, USCG Auxiliarist, Coxswain; Gregory A. Sarafin, USCG Auxiliarist, Crewman

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