

So you want to help America
 The Coast Guard Auxiliary is more than just boats...
 By Prof. Wayne Spivak

A few short weeks ago, life for America changed for ever. Just as it did some 59 years ago, Americans were shaken from compliancy by acts so horrific, they belie simple explanations. Even back then, the USCG Auxiliary (then called the Reserve) was playing a major role in recreational boating safety and search and rescue.

Today, more than ever, the Auxiliary may be just the place you want to be, helping both your neighborhood and your country in a time of need. Make no mistake about it, both the Coast Guard and your country need all the help it can get, and not just for Homeland Defense, or to fight terrorism, but in everyday aspects that we still take for granted.

While there is a new heightened sense of security issues, all the other issues that were present in your life still exist. Let's see if some of the roles that the Coast Guard Auxiliary is involved with meets your desires...

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Opportunities	
Desire	Fulfillment in the Auxiliary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You want to help our country with Homeland Defense.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations • Air Operations • Communications • Marine Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>So, you're not really a boater, but your all for the environment.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Safety And Environmental Protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Search and Rescue intrigues you, but you have no training.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search and Rescue • Air Operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You're interested in marine science, and feel that the fishing industry isn't safe.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Fishing Vessel Operation • Operation Safe Catch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You a history buff and you want to the help the Library of Congress record oral histories of World War I and World War II veterans.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library of Congress Interviewers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You've always wanted to teach, but never had the opportunity.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational Boating Safety • Member Training • Public Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Role Model for young adults/teenagers</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Counselors • Project AIM (Academy Introduction Mission) • Project MITE (Minority Introduction to Engineering)

You can make your opportunity in the USCG Auxiliary. That's right, the Auxiliary can provide you the opportunity to both learn new skills and provide public service right where you live! All they ask is that you volunteer. All you need to do is ask.

Training may take some time, and some of the qualifications you may earn require additional maintenance time, but with those exceptions there is no minimum number of hours you need to commit.

Who joins the Auxiliary? Men and women, who are US Citizens and over 17 years of age. Professionals, students, retired people, retired military, teachers, electricians, doctors, plumbers, lawyers, shipping clerks, computer professionals. All walks of life join the Auxiliary, with the same ultimate common goal.

The 38,000 men and women who volunteer their time with the CG Auxiliary do so because they want to make a difference. They want to make a difference in their neighborhood and region. They care! And what's more important is they have and continue to make a difference! That's the common goal, to make a difference.

I myself just joined the Auxiliary. Why you ask? Because I, like most Americans saw the World Trade Center disaster unfold on television. But in my case it goes even further. I knew many of the responders (police, fire and emergency medical workers) and used to be a member of NYC's Emergency Medical Service. I also knew one of America's heroes, who died so others may live.

I was unable, unlike in 1993, to respond and assist. One of the first rules of rescue is don't become a victim! The smoke and air quality was so bad, that if I had gone and helped, I would have become a victim, instead of a rescuer.

So I started to search for an organization that was doing something about our national crises. I have always been involved in public service, and have been involved in recreational boating safety for the past 9 years. So I knew about the Auxiliary, but never thought it was right for me.

I was wrong. I never realized that the men and women of the Auxiliary back-fill almost every job in the Coast Guard with the exception of direct law enforcement and military activities. I didn't know Auxiliaries were on duty at the Coast Guard office just a few blocks away from the World Trade Center.

Within minutes of the disaster these Auxiliarists and others from all over the metropolitan region called their local stations and offered their assistance. Immediately the Coast Guard used their force multiplier, the volunteers who are the Auxiliary, to boost the number of boats, planes and people available for all functions of the Coast Guard.

Within an hour of the disaster CG Auxiliary vessels, which are privately owned boats, manned by trained volunteers sped to the disaster to assist in ferrying police, fire, medical

personal, as well as supplies and anything else needed. This was done as the regular Coast Guard vessels were maintaining port security. If you're thinking you have to spend a lot of money to be a member, you're wrong. As long as you're on what's called reimbursable orders (in other words, you're officially working), the Coast Guard will reimburse you for certain expenses. Other expenses, such as uniforms or equipment, are not reimbursed but are tax deductible (speak to your tax advisor about this).

All over the country, Auxiliary members were called in to assist the regular members of the Coast Guard, as our Armed Force were put on high alert. As the regular Coast Guard officers and enlisted were arming themselves and going on security patrols, the Auxiliary members (who by law are forbidden to participate in law enforcement and military actions) took over all the other jobs.

Each member, who was trained by either Coast Guard or Auxiliary trainers, used their specific training to aid America. They went on Search and Rescue missions. They handled the radio traffic, they did paperwork, they moved supplies by vehicle, and they did perimeter patrols. The key words here are that THEY DID!

So if you're like me, and want to DO, instead of just sitting by and letting someone else do it, then contact your local United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla.