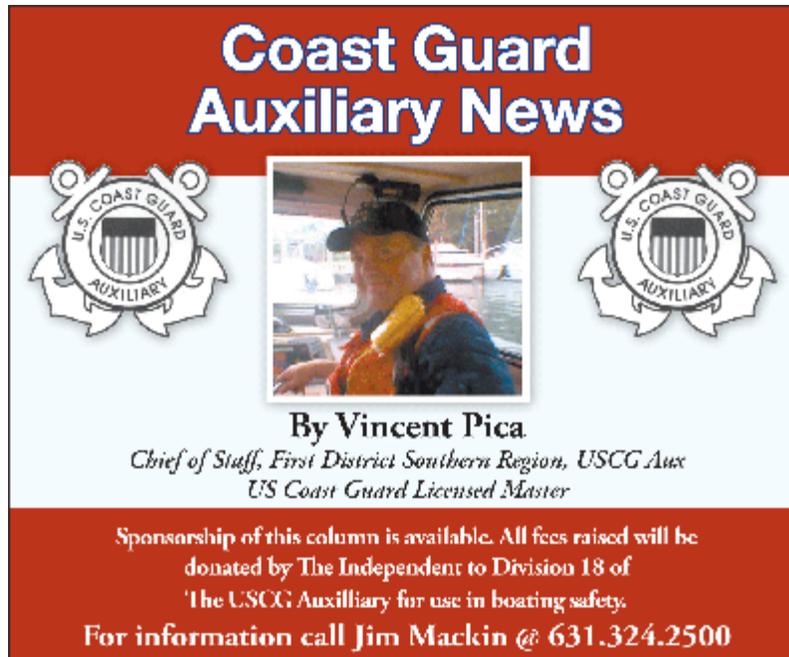


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**INDEPENDENT**

**Vincent Pica**  
**Chief of Staff, First District, Southern Region (D1SR)**  
**United States Coast Guard Auxiliary**

[Coast Guard Aux NEWS](#) ▶

June 15, 2011



The graphic features a red header with the text "Coast Guard Auxiliary News" in white. Below the header is a white section containing two U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary logos on either side of a central photograph of a man in a boat. Below the photo, the author's name and title are listed. The bottom section is red with white text providing sponsorship information and a contact number.

**Coast Guard  
Auxiliary News**

**By Vincent Pica**  
*Chief of Staff, First District Southern Region, USCG Aux*  
*US Coast Guard Licensed Master*

Sponsorship of this column is available. All fees raised will be  
donated by The Independent to Division 18 of  
The USCG Auxilliary for use in boating safety.  
For information call Jim Mackin @ 631.324.2500

### **'GET ME IN THIS THING' JOINING THE US COAST GUARD**

In the days that followed September 11, 2001, those words kept running through my head, "What could I do that would be something more concrete than writing a check to the Red Cross?"

While many Americans turned to volunteerism in order to put their hearts, hands and minds at work, I was faced with two realities at nearly 48. I wasn't exactly what the Army Recruiter at Times Square in New York had as number one on his list of potential (or wanted) candidates and secondly, it was apparent that the terrorists were seriously dedicated to wiping out as many Americans as possible. The unthinkable suddenly became thinkable. "Terrorists are coming here to kill my wife and kids" kept running through my mind.

I suppose I could have fallen into a mental "Maginot Line" at that point, board up the windows, form caches of water, medicines and food and just keep peering over the ramparts and hope they never come.

A friend in the US Military advised me to "Do something you love. Many school-age children

wanted to be fire fighters or police officers when they were kids or go volunteer to help them." So, I thought about it beyond family, nation and our God above, what do I love? The sea spread out before my mind's eye.

So, I turned to the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, an integral part of the United States Coast Guard Forces. I submit that it is among the most effective ways to "get in this thing." If you live, work or summer "out east" on Long Island, please read on.

Over two hundred years ago, Richard "Light Horse" Harry Lee, one of George Washington's commanders and ironically the father of Robert E. Lee, coined the immortal saying about George Washington himself; "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." The key about an Auxiliarist is that they are neither for war nor for peace but are all about being for America. The US Coast Guard Auxiliary is a creature of the Congress itself.

Congress established the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1939 to assist the US Coast Guard active-duty corps in promoting boating safety. It boasts more than 32,000 members from all walks of life who receive special training so that they may be a functional and functioning part of US Coast Guard Forces.

Today the USCG Auxiliary plays a larger role with greater responsibilities than at any other time in history. Auxiliarists are at the helm of Marine safety and security patrols, serving as foreign language interpreters, educating the public on recreational boating safety, and supporting many other vital operational and administrative Missions. In 2010, USCG Auxiliarists up and down the east coast of America donated over 2.6 million hours in service to our country from cooks in galleys to search and rescue.

The US Coast Guard Auxiliary, like any large organization, has an organization. There is a national level, a district level, a divisional level and, ultimately, the flotilla level. The flotilla is where the rubber meets the road or, better put, where the hull meets the waves.

All members join the Auxiliary by joining a local flotilla and that is where the real work gets done, everything from Crew Augmentation on USCG sea-going vessels to helping out in the mess hall at a duty station. And, there couldn't be a better time to join as USCG Auxiliary is in the midst of a concerted recruitment campaign!

Do you need a boat to join? Absolutely not! We'll train you to become a certified crewmember. However, if you have one and want to get it certified as an "operational facility," you one day 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? Again, no! There are many jobs within the USCG Auxiliary that are wholly land-based; public education, public affairs, radio watch standing at a USCG Coast Guard station or helping out as a mechanic at the motor pool. You don't even have to like the water, you just have to want to "get in this thing" and do something for your nation.

It has been said that this will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the

brave.

Be brave. Get in this thing.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at [JoinUSCGAux@aol.com](mailto:JoinUSCGAux@aol.com) or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at [DSO-HR](#) and we will help you “get in this thing...”