

# The Leadership News

A quarterly newsletter on leadership and diversity in the Coast Guard

Issue 22 Summer 2003

## “Servant-Leaders,” Once Again, Receive Prestigious Leadership Awards

by Lynne Donahue, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WTL)

Each year, one Coast Guard officer and one chief petty officer are selected from the entire Coast Guard to receive leadership awards. On March 26, the commandant, Adm. Thomas Collins,

presented the Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award to Lt. Cmdr. James Elliott of the Seventh Coast Guard District in Miami. Adm. Collins also awarded the McShan Inspirational Leadership

Award to BMC Terry Lathrop of Station St. Clair Shores, Mich. The ceremony took place at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington, D.C. After the ceremony, both award winners were honored guests at the commandant’s State of the Coast Guard address and luncheon.

In a continuing trend for these awards, both winners personify the idea of “servant-leadership,” a term coined by Robert Greenleaf in an

essay written in 1970. Greenleaf described the servant-leadership style as: “The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings

one to aspire to lead. He or she is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.”

Ghizzoni proposed that ‘caring is key to Coast Guard leadership.’ And the 2002 award recipient, Cmdr. Henderson, urged us to simply be there for your people when they need you.”

In his acceptance speech, Elliott continued:

“I believe Capt. Witherspoon would also agree that caring for those around you is the foundation of being a good leader. It encompasses the tenets of our core values, to honor and respect those around you and in doing so your duties will be devoted to making their lives better. As Admiral Collins advocates, our people should be at center-stage and the main focus of our attention. If we can get that right, we will excel at our many missions and achieve operational excellence.”

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*BMC Terry Lathrop, Adm. Thomas Collins and Lt. Cmdr. James Elliott*

### A History of Servant-Leaders

After being selected for the Witherspoon award, Elliott researched prior years’ winners. He noted, “There is a common theme among the previous Witherspoon Award recipients’ acceptance remarks. In 1999, Cmdr. Philip Ross noted that when you take care of your people, rewards will follow. In 2000, Cmdr. Michael

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“The leadership style that I have found best characterizes Capt. Witherspoon and the past award-recipients is that of the servant-leader. And it is the style of leadership that I most strive to practice. Though the words ‘servant’ and ‘leader’ are usually thought of as opposites, I believe that the best leaders are those that focus on placing service to others first and only then aspire to exercise leadership.

“In the past few years, servant-leadership has been touted by academics as ‘an emerging leadership paradigm’ – a move away from the traditional autocratic and hierarchical models of leadership. With the Coast Guard being a humanitarian organization, committed daily to saving lives and protecting our nation, this style of leadership is at the core of our greatness as a caring community.”

### **Mentoring, Communication and Teamwork**

**E**lliott’s speech then touched on three important leadership topics. He continued:

“I would like to briefly apply the traits of the servant-leader to three of the most important Coast Guard leadership competencies: mentoring, effective communication and teamwork.

“Mentoring is consistently promoted as an excellent method to develop future leaders. Too often, however, we focus more on obtaining the title of ‘mentor’ (as we do

the title of ‘leader’), for an evaluation or our own personal gain rather than acknowledging that we each need to be mentored. Just as servant-leaders focus first on serving others, effective mentors seek first to be mentored.

“I am thankful for the many mentors that have guided me throughout my career. For example, when I was a seaman apprentice, BM3 Bev Buysse took the time to help me study for the daunting task of passing the navigation rules exam. She patiently taught me how to run a motor lifeboat and, most importantly, that your crew always comes first.

“It is not a coincidence that the last two Witherspoon recipients were mentored by Capt. Ray Seebald. He creates an environment where everyone can succeed. One of the first things he told me as a new officer was, ‘I won’t let you fail.’ Now I, too, try to create a work environment where everyone succeeds.

“My most recent mentor, Eric Mosher, also creates a ‘failure is not an option’ atmosphere. Though I had the pleasure of writing Eric’s evaluation over the past three years, the roles were often reversed, with him providing the sage counsel to me. The lesson from

this is that mentors are all around you (even those that may work for you); just seek them out.

“Effective Communication: I know that most officers define effective communication as speaking in public and directing others. However, for the servant-leader, the most valuable communication skill is just the opposite: listening. Listening to what is being said and not said. Listen first. By the way, this is really hard to do.

“Teamwork: Finally, we spend a great deal of time promoting the

### **Coast Guard Leadership Hall of Fame**

The following people are past recipients of these awards:

#### **Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award**

2002 Cmdr. Lynn Henderson  
2001 Lt. Michael Davanzo  
2000 Cmdr. Michael Ghizzoni  
1999 Lt. Cmdr. Philip Ross  
1998 Lt. Cmdr. Karl Schultz  
1997 Lt. Russell Davidson  
1996 Lt. Cmdr. Timothy O’Leary  
1995 Cmdr. Manson Brown

#### **McShan Inspirational Leadership Award**

2002 EMC Jerome Rider

concept of teamwork. That’s a good thing. As members of Team Coast Guard, we must truly value the work of others and be committed to their growth as individuals and as fellow team members. A servant-leader seeks first to build a commu-

nity, a team, rather than to push his or her way to the head of the pack. I take pride in the fact that I have far more team awards than personal awards.”

### **A Mandate of Respect**

**E**lliott concluded his speech by talking about respect and servant leadership:

“Whenever I teach a Coast Guard course, I always get a laugh when I tell the class that I’m a company man and you can trust me to give you the company line. So I will give you the company line on teamwork: the Coast Guard Equal Opportunity Program Manual (COMDTINST M5350.4) states, ‘The Coast Guard mandates that all members of Team Coast Guard – regular and reserve military, civilian, non-appropriated fund, and Auxiliary – are to be treated fairly, with respect, dignity and compassion.’ This is a powerful mandate. I think that it should be posted by every phone and on every desk in our organization.

“Servant-leadership is a simple idea – those who serve first and then choose to lead can make the biggest difference in an organization and in people’s lives. In practice, however, it is not so simple. It requires us to view leadership from a different perspective – to seek mentorship first before declaring ourselves a mentor, to listen first before giving orders and directions, and to strive to serve before assuming a leadership role.

“A great servant-leader that has impacted me personally once said,

‘Whoever would be first among you must be servant of all.’ Servant-leadership is inspired leadership. It is a leadership style that puts our core values into action. I continue to believe that serving should be our first concern and that the opportunity to exercise inspirational leadership will naturally follow.”

### **Reaching Higher**

**W**hile he did not discuss servant-leadership in his acceptance speech, BMC Terry Lathrop’s nomination for the McShan Inspirational Leadership award was brimming with evidence that he is the utmost servant-leader (see sidebar on page 5). Lathrop focused his speech on the many aspects of leadership required for success at the unit:

“After 16 years of service and advancing to the rank of chief petty officer, I was told that there would be more responsibility and expectations. How right my mentors were. I attended the Chief Petty Officer Academy and decided to adopt a new outlook, determination and the motto, ‘Altus Tendo (I reach higher).’ I discovered there was no formula for leadership, but I do believe in three keys to successful leadership ... purpose, motivation and core values.”

### **Purpose, Motivation and Core Values**

**I**n his acceptance speech, Lathrop continued:

“Purpose: Leadership consists of more than the approaches, capabilities and attributes talked about at

leadership schools and the books we read. Without purpose, there is no team, only a group of individuals with no reason to be together. A team with a purpose but no method will end up well intentioned but unsuccessful. The power of a positive attitude is enormous when you have a defined purpose. People who feel good about themselves are going to be more productive. At Station St. Clair Shores, we interact with each other in many ways – as supervisors, mentors, managers, team members, team leaders, peers and subordinates. Positive, professional relationships provide a foundation for the success of our unit. Effective communication between people is essential to accomplishing anything. Purpose, vision, priority, planning and focus can help align teams, integrate them into a common system of improvement and accomplish something of major importance. This was so true this past year when Station St. Clair Shores earned their first ever Sumner I. Kimball award for high readiness.

“Motivation: We constantly get caught up in the same daily routines and need to be reminded of why we are out doing what we are doing. We must motivate others to achieve desired outcomes by directing, coaching and delegating, as each situation requires. We must recognize the importance of building professional relationships and empower others by delegating power and responsibility and holding them accountable. As chiefs, we must gain cooperation and

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commitment from others and continue to set the example by always maintaining a spiritual and effective outlook, assist others in their development by sharing experience and knowledge, and provide feed-

back to others on their leadership and career development. We must help others identify professional goals, strengths and areas for improvement. Good leaders and motivators leave no doubt in their people's minds why the organization exists, what it does, where it is

headed, and what important things are to be done now.

“Core values: The Coast Guard has built a framework for strengthening leader development. Our core

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## In Good Company

The following people were also nominated for the 2003 leadership awards:

### Witherspoon Award

**Lt. Cmdr. James Andrews**, CGC Thunder Bay (Honorable Mention)  
**Lt. Beth Naff**, AirSta Elizabeth City (Honorable Mention)  
**Lt. Cmdr. Brian Penoyer**, MSO Jacksonville (Honorable Mention)  
**Cmdr. James Tunstall**, Group Charleston (Honorable Mention)  
**Cmdr. Thomas Atkin**, TACLET North Portsmouth  
**CWO Karen Brooks**, Yard  
**Lt. Stephen Burdian**, CGC Padre  
**Cmdr. Richard Button**, CGC Venturous  
**CWO Patrick Culver**, Station South Padre Island  
**Cmdr. Robert Desh**, International Ice Patrol Groton  
**Lt. Steven Doyle**, CGC Harriet Lane  
**Lt. Cmdr. Peter Hatch**, CGC Gentian  
**Cmdr. Steven Hudson**, MSO Pittsburgh  
**Lt. Christopher Hulser**, AirSta San Francisco  
**Lt. Cmdr. Robert Laahs**, Group New Orleans  
**Lt. Cmdr. Carola List**, AirSta Clearwater  
**Lt. Cmdr. Erin MacDonald**, TraCen Yorktown  
**CWO David Marchuk**, ISC Alameda  
**Cmdr. Kyle Moore**, Academy  
**CWO Paul Morgan**, CGC Walnut  
**CWO Guy Morrow**, CGC Walnut  
**Lt. Cmdr. Todd Prestidge**, CGC Bramble  
**Lt. James Reilly**, ISC Portsmouth  
**Lt. Cmdr. Brian Roche**, Station Atlantic City  
**Lt. Jeffrey Smith**, Station Miami Beach  
**Lt. Anthony Stobbe**, CGC Naushon  
**Lt. Terry Trelford**, CGC Dallas

**Lt. Cmdr. Leonard Tumbarello**, Group Astoria  
**Cmdr. Steve Weiden**, TraCen Yorktown

### McShan Award

**DCC Loren Evans**, ISC San Pedro (Honorable Mention)  
**MKC Christopher Falcone**, CGC Sassafras (Honorable Mention)  
**MKC Zeffery Mims**, ISC New Orleans (Honorable Mention)  
**BMC Jeffery Sherman**, CGC Walnut (Honorable Mention)  
**MKC Robert Booker**, NESU Boston  
**SKC Stacey Dolly**, AirSta Miami AVDET  
**BMC Morgan Dudley**, Group Mobile  
**MKC Charles Franklin**, CGC Stingray  
**YNC Debbie Hutchins**, AirSta Sitka  
**GMC Eric Jesionowski**, TraCen Cape May  
**MKC Timothy Johnson**, CGC Farallon  
**AMTC Randy Jones**, AirSta Savannah  
**QMC Mark King**, Group Fort Macon  
**AVTC John Lorentz**, AirSta Kodiak  
**YNC Edwin Martin**, CGC Tampa  
**FSC Michael Merrill**, TraCen Petaluma  
**PSC Robert Minard**, MSO Tampa  
**YNC Patricia Powell**, MLC Atlantic  
**MKC Jason Self**, CGC Chincoteague  
**QMC James Shelton, Jr.**, TraCen Yorktown  
**EMC Bryan Stiers**, CGC Valiant  
**QMC Gregory Tanner**, Group Mobile  
**BMC Darin Wallace**, Station Golden Gate

## Servant-Leaders in Action

Here are excerpts from the award nominations for BMC Terry Lathrop and Lt. Cmdr. James Elliott:

### Chief Petty Officer Terry Lathrop:

- Developed a “Mentor-for-Trainee” program in which junior petty officers took an active leadership and mentorship role in developing newly assigned personnel.
- Augmented the duty section countless times as a coxswain, crewman, officer of the day and boarding officer so that others could take leave or attend personal business and college night courses.
- Supported a student in the College Student Pre-commissioning Initiative (a Coast Guard diversity program). Provided four weeks of operational training and Coast Guard mission exposure. Integrated the student into the station’s normal routine and provided leadership counseling to the potential junior officer.
- Received more than 20 letters of appreciation from community organizations for his tremendous outreach efforts and dedication to others.
- Single-handedly built a solid partnership with the local Coast Guard Auxiliary (previously a non-existent relationship). Ensured station personnel attended all local Auxiliary meetings. Fostered a 500 percent increase in Auxiliary participation in unit support, such as qualified watch standers, search and rescue support and boating safety patrols.
- Held the first-ever station senior petty officer mast proceeding to evaluate people with diminished performance or those in line for nonjudicial punishment. The result was improved performance by six members, the prevention of at least four nonjudicial punishments and enhanced retention.

### Lt. Cmdr. James Elliott:

- As a testament to his ability to excel on any team, he has been awarded 12 Meritorious Team Awards; at one point, he received four team awards in less than four months.
- In 2002, all of his subordinates received awards, including two members who earned national awards for civil rights and marine safety achievements.
- Personally mentored a member who was going through a tumultuous period and was planning to leave the service. He made sure the member’s personal and professional needs were met; the member is now a top performer who motivates others to succeed.
- During the absence of the civil rights officer in 2002, he stepped forward to lead the district-wide civil rights and human relations programs. Leaning forward with an aggressive civil rights training program, more than 5,200 military and civilian employees were instructed in human relations, sexual harassment awareness and equal opportunity initiatives. Additionally, he expanded the training program to include conflict resolution courses.
- Given his exceptional grasp of human relations and civil rights policy and extraordinary communication skills, he successfully resolved virtually all civil rights complaints at the informal level.
- He led 15 federal agencies in the creation of a regional multicultural celebration to celebrate the value of strength through diversity.

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values – honor, respect and devotion to duty – frame the behaviors the Coast Guard expects from its people. We all must understand and support the Coast Guard’s commitment to respect every individual in the workplace and beyond, recognize and promote the value of diversity, and foster an environment that supports diverse individuals, perspectives, fairness, dignity, compassion and creativity in the workplace. We must learn

to interact well with all types of people, which will help us appreciate individual differences. This will also eliminate misunderstandings and conflicts, improve communication, and produce healthier, more productive relationships, both personally and professionally. We should be able to make any workplace a place where everyone looks forward to coming to work. A workplace can be a place of healing or a place where disruption takes place. A leader’s job is to create an environment that is healing.” ❖

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#### Article Submissions

We need your articles on leadership and diversity issues and best practices. Article length should be 400 words or fewer.

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## The Power of Sincere Appreciation

by Lt. Steve Bird, Group Moriches, N.Y.

**H**ave you ever noticed how much harder someone works toward doing a quality job when they feel they were involved in the decision-making process and not just handed another order? Well, I found another factor that contributes positively to performance for such routine tasks as an emergency repair of a vessel or replacing a leaky hot water heater.

As I was finishing up in the office one day, I received an e-mail message complimenting my damage controlmen on the job they had done building a deck for a station. I headed for the gate that evening on a positive note and certainly felt that we must be doing something right.

As I passed the DC shop, I noticed a car still there and a shop bay door open, so I stopped. The DC3 was working on a job, and I extended the station’s thanks for a job well done. “What are you working on?” I asked. “I’m fabricating a

bracket for a new anchor light that the station bought to put on their 21 footer,” he replied. I extended my thanks for reflecting so well on our department, and then headed home for dinner.

The next morning, my curiosity got to me so I stopped again to speak with the DC3. “What is it about that station that makes you work so hard for them?” I asked. He thought for minute, then said, “The officer-in-charge and the executive petty officer really appreciate our work – they say things like, ‘We could never have saved those fishermen last night if you hadn’t finished the welding repairs on our boat yesterday.’”

At that moment, two things became clear to me: the power of specific, sincere appreciation and the value of conveying how a person’s role contributes to accomplishing the mission. By doing these two “small” things, you can empower and motivate others. ❖

## LEADERSHIP ESSAY

## Consistency Is Critical To Good Leadership

by Lt. Bill Morgan, Group Grand Haven, Mich.

The Coast Guard's 21 leadership competencies and core values are keys to success and good leadership. Woven through these competencies and values is a critical element that binds these traits together: consistency. Without uniform application, these building blocks of leadership lose their value. Inconsistency in implementing the competencies breeds confusion, frustration and anger. When managers send inconsistent messages to employees, the result is inconsistent performance.

I have worked for numerous supervisors throughout my career. One supervisor was the world's greatest micro-manager. Another believed in giving people a free hand in accomplishing projects. Both individuals were successful in accomplishing goals. The key to their success was their consistency. The micro-manager was consistently "in the weeds" while the other supervisor was consistently focused on the big picture. I knew what to expect from each supervisor and adapted my work posture accordingly.

The greatest challenge I experienced as a follower, and as a leader, resulted from working for an inconsistent supervisor. I gave orders to personnel based on my supervisor's instructions, knowing those instruc-

tions could be changed unexpectedly and in opposition to the original instructions. Before long, this pattern of inconsistent tasking led my shipmates to question my sanity as well as my leadership ability. At times, I was not allowed to make decisions without my supervisor's approval; then I was berated for not assuming the responsibility and making the decision myself. My supervisor's policies, procedures and expectations changed from one day to the next.

For the first time in my life, I began to lose confidence. I often delayed difficult decisions or pushed them off on someone else to avoid the inevitable criticism from an unpredictable manager. I became a poor follower and a worse leader. I was frustrated and confused and felt like a failure. For months, I struggled with uncertainty and hopelessness as I tried to please my supervisor. I approached my boss on several occasions to discuss concerns, but received contradictory or ambiguous feedback each time. With the hopes of identifying patterns and reducing my frustrations, I reviewed each aspect of my daily routine before leaving work. I determined that I was unable to consistently adapt my work posture because of my supervisor's shifting leadership styles.

A byproduct of this unpleasant environment was my belief that another employee was being treated differently than I. While this inequitable treatment may have only been my perception, it was fueled by the inconsistent treatment I received. If my boss were inconsistent in dealing with daily processes, why wouldn't there be inconsistencies in dealing with staff? My perception led to resentment toward my supervisor and the other employee. This experience impressed upon me the importance of treating others equally.

I eventually learned to adjust my interactions and manage my expectations while dealing with my supervisor, but things never ran smoothly. At best, it was a tough situation. Other people within the command voiced frustrations to me. The frequency of these complaints highlighted how easily one individual's inconsistency can lower morale and change the tone of an entire unit. On a more positive note, I gained patience and more self-control. This difficult lesson taught me how critical consistency really is to good leadership. ✦

**The Coast Guard's 21 leadership competencies are available online at [www.uscg.mil/leadership/](http://www.uscg.mil/leadership/) (click on "Leadership").**

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**This newsletter is sent to every Coast Guard unit.  
Please make sure everyone at your  
unit has the opportunity to read it.**

**Honor**



**Respect**



**Devotion to Duty**

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