

# The Leadership News

A quarterly newsletter on leadership and diversity in the Coast Guard

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## Caring is the Key to Coast Guard Leadership

### Cmdr. Michael Ghizzoni, 2000 Witherspoon Award Winner, Explains the Value of Caring Leadership

*Cmdr. Michael Ghizzoni was selected as the sixth annual recipient of the Capt. John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award. Ghizzoni, chief of Claims and Litigation, Maintenance & Logistics Command Pacific, received the award March 6 from the vice commandant, Vice Adm. James Card. Here is what Ghizzoni said:*

I am honored to discuss the Coast Guard's long-time commitment to caring leadership. In particular, I am proud of what our crew has accomplished at Maintenance & Logistics Command Pacific over the past several years. Some of our experiences enriching the professional skills of our people can be used at other Coast Guard units.

It may help you to know about us at MLC PAC. Our legal division has a total of 37 people, 13 of whom are civilians and 10 of whom are direct commission lawyers. For seven of these 10 direct commission lawyers, ours was their first Coast

Guard unit following only an austere two-to-three week orientation course. They were bright, but they came to us very unfamiliar with the Coast Guard. Many of our civilian employees also had not received enough orientation to Coast Guard missions; they were proficient specialists, but they had not been given a recent 10,000-foot view of where the Coast

Guard was trying to go. So, just as on a cutter with new people, we simply had to invest in caring leadership to better accomplish what, in our case, is a support mission.

Caring leadership has four components:

- Day-to-day mission accomplishment
- True caring for our people
- Continuous improvement
- The moral high ground, as provided by the Coast Guard's Core Values



*Cmdr. Michael Ghizzoni and Vice Adm. James Card during Witherspoon Award presentation.*

### Day-To-Day Mission Accomplishment

At MLC PAC, this requires us to focus on whom we support and, ideally, to anticipate what those units need. Our day-to-day mission accomplishment is reinforced, not detracted from, by true caring for our people.

### True Caring for our People

This includes providing and encouraging professional enrichment and providing a safe and optimum physical work environment.

A caring leadership environment is contagious and reinforcing. Here is an example. One of my unit's

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most successful caring leaders is a first-tour direct commission lawyer. Long before she attended the direct commission officer course, my unit reached out to her. We planned five weeks of operational familiarization for when she arrived. We also gave her (and our other personnel) an opportunity to work at a local operational unit on a recurring, part-time basis.

Later, when I needed a caring leader to build a flextime program for seven of our civilians and petty officers to attend community college computer classes, this new lieutenant junior grade provided caring support for them. Result? Our crew came back with the right skills, just in time to support our progression to a shared database with the Finance Center.

Another example is the top-notch rate-training program that Chief Warrant Officer Sue Reed initiated for all yeomen on Coast Guard Island. That program is now run by the involved petty officers themselves.

Now let me describe the details of how most of MLCPAC's first-tour direct commission lawyers invest in themselves and the Coast Guard. Basically, these people work what is considered an "RDO" – regular day off – schedule, but invest those two "extra" days per month into working at our local Marine Safety Office or Group. Our unit

then matches those two days, for a total of four days per person per month of recurring operational work. This arrangement is very similar to that performed around the Coast Guard by reservists. Our program is aimed at having these people qualify and serve as either a

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**"It is essential for leaders to take active steps daily to professionally broaden our people."**

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command duty officer or a boarding officer. The individual officer receives broadening and improved career potential. The operational unit receives a bright and enthusiastic resource. And the legal division both strengthens ties with our supported units and builds for the future.

### **Continuous Improvement**

**M**ost of the continuous improvement that my unit performs is what I think of as "lower cased" total quality management. In other words, being a lieutenant, a YN2 or a GS-7 should be "charter" enough to actively search for and act on potential improvements.

We have also been successful, however, with "upper case," or formal, TQM improvements. One of our lieutenants led the automation of our \$34 million civil penalty portfolio. Another lieutenant used formal TQM facilitation to better focus our support of the Marine Safety business plan. And another

first-tour attorney spearheaded a working group that upgraded our computer hardware to support a shared, real-time database with the Finance Center.

### **Moral High Ground**

**T**his really boils down to applying the Coast Guard's core value of "honor" to the ethical conflicts that our people occasionally face in the legal program. On any one day, people at MLCPAC legal division make decisions about dozens of civil penalty, military justice and other cases. This many cases could invite inadvertent ethical slips if we did not continuously remind our people that they are part of an organization that makes *honor* its first core value.

### **Too Busy?**

**L**ife is full of choices. In my experience, it is essential for Coast Guard leaders to take active steps *daily* to professionally broaden our people. For people who say that their unit's day-to-day mission is too busy for this, I can only say that you will be busier yet when you have to react to frustration and attrition. True caring for our people *reinforces* mission accomplishment, while also making the Coast Guard a more rewarding place to work.

I ask each of you to please consider – as we did at MLCPAC – what types of professional enrichment could best benefit your people, especially those that come to you without a broad background in Coast Guard operations. ❖

## A Leader to Learn From

**Cmdr. Ghizzoni received three separate nominations for the Capt. John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award. His own caring leadership is evident by the impressive accounts given of his leadership actions. Here are some excerpts:**

“He identified a need for direct commission lawyers to go out into the operational Coast Guard to broaden their experience and expose them to the clients they would be serving. Cmdr. Ghizzoni then created and implemented a program in which every new lawyer who reports to MLCPAC spends an intense month visiting and participating at operational Coast Guard units. They get under way, airborne, seasick and acquainted with a Coast Guard that most direct commission lawyers never know.”

“As a prior enlisted soldier, I am an admirer of Cmdr. Ghizzoni’s successful efforts to look out for junior people. When I wanted to bring a law student petty officer reservist on active duty as a summer law clerk, he supported that effort, then made me her supervisor so that I could get management experience – rare for junior law specialists. ... As a result, that petty officer has been offered a commission in the legal program.”

“I know of dozens of instances where he pushed to resolve claims for young sailors who thought they would never get anything out of the bureaucratic Coast Guard claims system.”

“He carved out a program for four GS-9s and GS-7s to take an introductory computer class at the local community college. The results were typical-Ghizzoni: the employees all earned As and Bs; our work force began to exude a renewed confidence and new skills were put to use in implementing compliance goals. The cost to the Coast Guard for these good results was about \$36 per employee.”

“He is the mentor for most of the attorneys at the MLC, even though they may be in another branch. He is the de facto career development mentor in the division. He has assisted every junior attorney with the formal process of integrating into the Coast Guard. I would venture that most timely and deserved awards presented to members at the legal office at MLCPAC had their genesis in Cmdr. Ghizzoni. Somehow when something good happens, everyone around him gets all the credit.”

“He is a cagey and winning litigator. He knows the operational Coast Guard. He pays great attention to detail in one instance, and he comes up with a totally ‘outside the box’ solution in another. Even though he is no longer my supervisor, he takes an active interest in my caseload and my career path. He is an extremely principled officer who always supports his people, not only ‘his people’ but anyone he thinks will be dealt an injustice by bureaucratic thinking or institutional dogma.”

“I know of no other officer who could leave such a favorable impression on the public while at the same time enforcing an assessed civil penalty.”

“If you do a project for Cmdr. Ghizzoni, you will come out successful and feeling good about yourself.”

Leadership & Diversity

**BEST PRACTICES**

**Language Skills Reap \$ for the Coast Guard**

from MLCPAC Claims & Litigation Branch

**D**id you know that the Coast Guard uses Chinese and Japanese dialects almost every day with shipping companies in the Far East? In 1997, Susan Fan of the Maintenance & Logistics Command Pacific's Claims & Litigation Branch received an "impact" upgrade because of her ability to break through language barriers previously claimed by many Pacific Rim shipping companies. Ms. Fan now enforces civil penalties against foreign parties using four dialects of Chinese (Taiwanese, Mandarin, Shanghaiinese and Cantonese), Japanese and English. Her language ability has brought the Coast Guard more than \$80,000 per year of civil penalty payments that would otherwise have gone uncollected.

MLCPAC, located in San Francisco, enforces delinquent civil penalty debts for the entire Coast Guard. Ms. Fan was born in Shanghai but, fortunately for MLCPAC, became a U.S. citizen. Her experience has evolved into a best fit for the Coast Guard. She was hired into the Claims & Litigation Branch in 1991, primarily to enforce civil penalties that had been assessed along the East Coast. As her job experience grew, changes in the world shipping market and the Marine Safety business plan caused the Coast Guard to assess many more civil penalties against Pacific Rim shipping companies. Ironically, the Coast Guard had an employee who was multilingual in Pacific Rim languages communicating

with parties who frequently preferred to use Spanish. At the same time, other Coast Guard employees were frustrated trying to communicate in English with Pacific Rim shipping companies.

MLCPAC made logical changes to better use Ms. Fan's impressive foreign language skills. This also prevented many Pacific Rim shipping companies from hiding behind their claimed inability to understand English. The Coast Guard obviously benefits from the strengths of multilingual employees like Ms. Fan. But we can do even better if we take advantage of all of our differences, not just language skills, to make the Coast Guard a stronger organization. ✠

***New and Improved Unit Leadership Program***

**A** personal ethics module has been added to the Unit Leadership Program. This module provides a framework for analyzing ethical dilemmas and understanding the differences between "right vs. right" and "right vs. wrong" situations. Participants discuss morals and ethics, learn about values common to all people and learn how to resolve ethical dilemmas. The Unit

Leadership Program consists of ten modules requiring anywhere from 20 minutes to three hours of time to present. For each module, the program includes simple guidelines and discussion points for the presenter to use. A unit may choose to do several modules or the whole program; it is completely flexible. The program is on the Web at [www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wt/g-wtl/unit](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wt/g-wtl/unit).

## “Team Coast Guard” a Reality

by Jim Maxner, Coast Guard Auxiliary

I recently had an experience that proved the concept of “Team Coast Guard.”

I spend a couple of weekends a month at Station South Portland, Maine. I go into the station on a Friday evening and stay until Sunday afternoon. I take part in almost all that goes on and am currently near qualification on the 41' utility boat and the 47' motor lifeboat. The weekends usually go by with some routine patrols, training and doing whatever needs to be done. I've taken part in various search and rescue cases from flare sightings, which usually prove to be false alarms, to trying to save the life of a drowning victim, which had an unfortunate ending.

In February, we were called out at 4:30 a.m. to investigate a flare sighting. We left the station in the utility boat and proceeded out of Portland Harbor, dodging ice as we went. The station was in contact with the person who called in the flare sighting and they were trying to get us more information as to the location. Once on scene we began a search pattern as directed by the station. As we started the second leg of the pattern, I had just steadied up on the new course when a flare went up a few thousand yards off the bow. Before it extinguished we caught sight of something in the water and hit it with the spotlight. We were a bit surprised to see a survival raft. The coxswain took the wheel and we came up alongside the

raft and grabbed onto the lifelines. As we secured the raft, the flap opened up and out popped five people! They turned out to be the crew of a 90' fishing vessel that had struck something and was taking on water. We got them aboard and headed for home. Once back at the station, the survivors were left in the hands of emergency medical technicians, and we headed back out to find the boat. She was sinking and we stood watch until she

sank. The loss of the boat was unfortunate but the fact that we were able to bring back five people put that on the back burner!

What really made this rescue great was the makeup of the utility boat crew. The coxswain was a reserve petty officer and his crew was two active duty petty officers and a seaman apprentice and an auxiliary. An example of Team Coast Guard at work! ☒

### It's on the Web ...

It's amazing what you can find when you know where to look. These leadership and diversity resources can be found at [www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm).

- ◆ **21 Leadership Competencies**
- ◆ **Career Development Advisors** – 19 advisors located at ISCs and the Institute to help people with career planning and professional, educational and leadership development
- ◆ **Coast Guard Core Values**
- ◆ **Diversity Information Center** – contains training materials, calendars, information on doing business globally, mediation across cultures, monthly themes and activities and more (**Intranet site** <http://cgweb.comdt.uscg.mil/g-wtl/divcen>)
- ◆ **Diversity Policy Statement**
- ◆ **Diversity Summit Proceedings and Best Practices** (Intranet site <http://cgweb.comdt.uscg.mil/g-wtl/divcen/cginfo/summit>)
- ◆ **Diversity Training Modules** – for individual and group use
- ◆ **Enlisted Career Development Program**
- ◆ **Leadership Commandant Instruction**
- ◆ **Leadership Essays**
- ◆ **The Leadership News** – current and back issues
- ◆ **Mentoring Information**
- ◆ **Mentoring Program** – look for a mentor or sign up to be a mentor
- ◆ **Officer Career Development Guidebook**
- ◆ **Professional Reading List with book summaries**
- ◆ **Unit Leadership Program** – a voluntary, flexible program that allows units to perform leadership training



# LEADERSHIP ESSAY

## Remember to Say “Thanks”

by QM1 M.P. Collins, Seventh District Office of Aids to Navigation

Imagine this scenario. You are called into your supervisor’s office to explain a project using a new technology that only you are familiar with. You are patient with your boss as you explain the intricacies and technical details, hoping that knowledge is being transferred. Almost certainly, he does not grasp

all of the concepts but enough to understand key operational words and phrases. Later in the day you overhear the command-

ing officer thanking your supervisor for the brief and saying to keep up the good work. You hear no mention of your name anywhere in the conversation.

What would your reaction be? Would you say to yourself, “Why should I stay here and break my back when I could work someplace else for more money and less hours?” You would not be alone.

The Coast Guard is increasingly struggling with retention of its most intelligent and technically skilled members. Many cite issues of money, long hours, family separation and a weak retirement plan as root causes. While these are all

legitimate reasons, senior managers consistently overlook one of the more fundamental causes of poor retention.

The Coast Guard is made up of paid volunteers. Volunteers will go where they are appreciated and compensated.

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**“We act as if even people were machines ... expecting them to perform to specifications with machine like obedience.”**

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depend on running the institution so as to attract, hold and motivate knowledge employees. When this can no longer be done by satisfying knowledge workers’ greed, as we are now trying to do, it will have to be done by satisfying their values, and by giving them social recognition and social power.”

The Coast Guard will increasingly depend on people who can say “no” as a career option. Yet as leadership consultant Margaret Wheatley describes, “Old ways die hard. Amid all the evidence that our world is radically changing, we cling to what has worked in the past. We still think of organizations in mechanistic terms, as collections of replace-

able parts capable of being reengineered. We act as if even people were machines, redesigning their jobs as we would prepare an engineering diagram, expecting them to perform to specifications with machine like obedience.”

People are not machines. Old paradigms of management must be swept away with new ones firmly embraced by Coast Guard leaders. Here are a few simple things supervisors can do to keep their subordinates:

- Say “thank you,” and often
- Say “great job,” and mean it
- Show a genuine interest in their personal and career welfare
- Ask for opinions and don’t be offended if it is not what you want to hear
- Build teamwork

While these steps will not solve all management and retention issues, it is a simple action plan we can all execute daily to ensure we keep our best people and build a superior Coast Guard for the future. ☒

*QM1 Collins is a master’s candidate in education leadership at Florida Atlantic University.*

**For information on the Leadership Essay Program, visit [www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm) (click on “Leadership Essays”).**

## The Lesser Known Munro

by Rear Adm. Paul Blayney and Lt. Mark Vlaun,  
Thirteenth Coast Guard District

**D**ouglas Munro, the Coast Guard's only Medal of Honor recipient, sacrificed his life in saving the lives of hundreds of Marines at Guadalcanal in 1942. His name and story are legend.

Edith Munro, mother of Douglas Munro, is credited with raising one of the Coast Guard and Marine Corps's greatest heroes, but few people know that Mrs. Munro was also *Lt.* Munro, of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve, also known as SPARs. Shortly after her son's death, Mrs. Munro joined the SPARs and attended officer candidate training at the Academy. Most of her colleagues were in their late teens and early twenties ... Edith Munro was in her mid-forties!

Mrs. Munro served as a public relations officer for six months, touring the country telling the Coast Guard's story. Then she became commanding officer of the Base Seattle barracks. Referred to as "the old lady," she was a teacher, mentor and mother to a gaggle of wartime recruits. She separated male and female accommodations in the barracks, established new regulations to smooth the transition of women into the Coast Guard, streamlined administrative processes, adjusted galley menus for better nutrition and made changes to the uniform.

Mrs. Munro was the first woman officer to attend Thirteenth District

staff meetings. Old, misplaced feelings of gender superiority flew out the door, as she became a valued and trusted advisor to Rear Adm. Frederick Zeusler. Edith Munro served until November 1945, earning a letter of commendation, a rare accomplishment at that time. Edith Munro's dedication to the Coast Guard continued for the next 40 years. She attended thousands of events and ceremonies as an active Coast Guard supporter. In fact, she was the honored guest at the 40 year commemoration of Guadalcanal, a year before her death in 1983.

Like her son, Edith Munro embodied the core values of *honor, respect and devotion to duty* long before those words were put to paper. ❖

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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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## UPCOMING CONFERENCE

### National Naval Officers Association Annual Conference

**Dates:** August 2-5, 2000

**Location:** Naval Amphibious Base Coronado in San Diego

**Theme:** Developing Leaders for the New Millennium

**More Info:** <http://nnoa-national.org/>

Commands are authorized to grant TAD orders to include conference registration fees, transportation costs and per diem. Commands may also issue permissive orders.

NNOA supports the sea services in recruiting, retaining and developing the careers of officers. The association provides professional development and mentoring and supports cultural diversity. ❖

**M**entoring is providing help when it's needed. Have you reached out to someone who could benefit from your experience? This "informal" mentoring is very effective and rewarding. For information and guidance on mentoring – informal and formal – go to [www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm) and click on "Mentoring."

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award-winning  
leader – page 3.**

**Language skills  
bring big bucks –  
page 4.**

**Easy ways to  
keep your people  
happy – page 6.**

