



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



February 24, 2012

Women's History Month

"Opportunities have never been better for those willing to take advantage of them. It makes no difference if you are a man or woman. If you are willing to grasp the opportunities the Navy has to offer and give it your full effort, then success will be yours."

– Retired Command Master Chief **Jacqueline L. K. DiRosa**, the first woman selected for both Force and Fleet Master Chief

Women's History Month originated in March 1978 when Sonoma County, Calif., initiated Women's History Week to coincide with International Women's Day. Three years later, Congress passed a joint resolution proclaiming a Women's History Week. In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March. This year's theme of "Women's Education – Women's Empowerment" celebrates the contributions women have made and continue to make to our nation and our Navy.

A Proud History of Strength and Service

Women have served in and with the Navy since the American Revolution and became an official part of the Navy with the establishment of the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. As a result of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act on June 12, 1948, women gained permanent status in the armed services. In 1978, women were assigned to selected non-combatant ships for the first time. In 1994, women began serving in combatants and piloting combat aircraft following the repeal of the Combat Exclusion Law. In April 2010, the Navy changed its policy allowing women to serve on submarines. In November 2011, after completing naval nuclear prototype, Naval Nuclear Power School at Charleston, S.C., and the Submarine Officer Basic Course in Groton, Conn., the first women reported onboard ballistic-missile submarines and guided-missile submarines in Kings Bay, Ga., and Bangor, Wash.

Notable women in the Navy, past and present, include:

- In 2009, for the first time in history, all four Sailors of the Year were women: Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Ingrid Cortez, U.S. Fleet Forces Sea Sailor of the Year; Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Shalanda Brewer, Navy Reserve Sailor of the Year; Operations Specialist 1st Class Samira McBride, U.S. Pacific Fleet Sea Sailor of the Year and Cryptologic Technician (Technical) 1st Class Cassandra Foote, Chief of Naval Operations Shore Sailor of the Year.
- The highest-ranking women in the Navy today are three-star admirals, Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, serving as National Defense University president and Vice Adm. Carol Pottenger, serving as deputy chief of staff, Capability Development at NATO Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.
- Cmdr. Regina Marengo and Lt. Megan Donnelly are 2012 Captain Joy Bright Hancock Leadership Award winners, and Chief Construction Electrician (SCW/DV) Lynn Rodriguez and Hospital Corpsmen 1st Class Sonseeahray Walker are winners of the 2012 Master Chief Anna Der-Vartanian Leadership Awards.

Promoting Professional Development of All Sailors

The Sea Service Leadership Association Joint Women's Leadership Symposium, March 5-6, National Harbor, Md., is an annual event highlighting the achievements of women. It is the largest gathering of women in uniform nationwide.

Key Messages

- Our Navy is strengthened by the diversity of our people. To be an effective fighting force, diversity must be reflected at all levels.
- Diversity of thoughts, ideas, and competencies keeps our Navy strong and empowers the protection of freedoms and opportunities we enjoy every day.
- Diversity has made our nation and Navy stronger. To benefit the most from that diversity, every individual, military or civilian, must be encouraged and enabled to reach his or her full potential.

Facts & Figures

- More than 54,000 active duty women and more than 10,000 female reservists are serving in the Navy, comprising 17.1 percent of the Navy Total Force.
- The Navy currently has 35 active and reserve female flag officers and 59 female command master chiefs.
- For more information on the history of women and their numerous contributions to the Navy, visit the Navy's Office of Women's Policy at: <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/organization/bupers/womenspolicy/Pages/default.aspx>