

DC CPOA Exchanges What?

Why did recent visitors to the Coast Guard Headquarters Chiefs Mess in Washington, DC witness hundreds of uniform items labeled and neatly stacked on all the tables? What did this image have to do with support to a military academy 1,000 miles away?

Ask these questions of members of the Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Association Washington, DC Chapter (DC CPOA) and you will get some enthusiastic replies. DC CPOA member MED4 James 'Doc' Roberts calls it "a win-win undertaking."

According to Roberts, the DC CPOA held its first Uniform Exchange 03-14 JUN 02. DC CPOA members invited Coast Guard Headquarters all hands to deliver their clean, serviceable uniform items to the Mess and browse the Mess for donated items that they could use. Dubbed the DC CPOA Uniform Exchange, the program assumed Roberts as its manager.

The DC Chiefs also invited Alexandria, VA and Baltimore, MD CPOA chapters to pass the invitation to Coasties at their units. The invitation especially targeted their outlying units, which are staffed largely by junior enlisted personnel. The DC Chiefs even offered to pick up items for free.

What does all this have to do with a military academy 1,000 miles away? The Uniform Exchange idea arose when the DC Chiefs learned that the Nation has only one Coast Guard JROTC and that the program needs support. Roberts contacted the Maritime and Science Technology High School (MAST Academy) in Miami, FL and learned that the students could use donated uniform items.

Then Roberts thought of another idea. The Uniform Exchange provided donors a convenient method to purge their uniform lockers at home and at work. In return for this service, why not invite cash donations to benefit the CPOA National Emergency Relief Fund? Originally scheduled for only 1 week, the continual influx of uniform donations and popular demand pressed the event to a second week. The event proved so popular that the DC CPOA may hold it again in 6 or 12 months.

After personally laundering at home many bags of leftover uniform shirts, Roberts joined the other DC Chiefs on 17 JUN 02 to ship about 40 shirts to MAST Academy JROTC members. The Chiefs also mailed a 44 - dollar check to the CPOA National Memorial Fund. The Chiefs then returned to offices made roomier by purged uniform items.

Interested in supporting the Nation's only Coast Guard JROTC program? Contact the MAST Academy at 305-365-6278, x2212, Senior Instructor, USCG JROTC, c/o MAST Academy, 3979 Rickenbacker Causeway, Miami, FL 33149, lasseter@mast.dade.k12.fl.us, <http://mast.dade.k12.fl.us/>.

The next Uniform Exchange is scheduled for 28 OCT - 08 NOV 02. For further information on the DC CPOA Uniform Exchange, contact MED4 James 'Doc' Roberts at JRoberts@comdt.uscg.mil.