

Duo shares Auxiliarist of Year honors

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-Maureen Daniels

Two members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Lake Anna Flotilla 87 were honored as "Auxiliarist of the Year" during the organization's Change of Watch dinner held on Saturday, Dec. 13 at Tanyard Country Club.

Maureen "Mo" Daniels and Gena Kunz were recognized by the Auxiliary for their efforts during 2008, going above and beyond the expected. Each year, the Auxiliary recognizes individual members for "maintaining an outstanding level of performance or achievement in furthering authorized activities of the Auxiliary." Outgoing Commander Barbara Kerr told those in attendance that the decision for 2008 was difficult to make and two ladies were chosen to share the honor.

"I am very proud of the Auxiliarist of the Year award because, in reality, it really reflects the hard work and dedication of the entire Flotilla, not just my efforts," Daniel said. "As the Flotilla Staff Officer for Operations. I am responsible for making sure we have well trained, qualified members who can run safely patrols during the boating season."

Daniels has been coming to Lake Anna part-time since 1993. She retired from Fairfax County Public Schools in 2003 following a 30-year career as an elementary school teacher and moved full-time to the lake, living on Contrary Creek at Pine Point subdivision.

Looking for something to fill her time in retirement, Daniels joined the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Lake Anna Flotilla 87 in 2005.

"I was looking for something worthwhile to do in retirement that would be challenging and different than teaching," Daniels said. "I worked with Virginia Gorski in Fairfax and her husband, Jack, is a founding member of the Lake Anna Auxiliary. They persuaded me my time and efforts would be well spent in the Coast Guard Auxiliary."

As a member of the Auxiliary, Daniels has taken numerous classes and received special training qualifying her as an instructor, coxswain, crew, personal watercraft operator, vessel examiner and radio watchstander.

Daniels has served as Flotilla Staff Officer for Operations and Communications, secretary of the Division and vice commander. She is also the unofficial member of the paparazzi, never far from her camera unless she's the one being photographed. Each year, she prepares a slide presentation of the Auxiliary's activities as part of the Change of Watch and records the activities, training and events for the future.



Gena Kunz (left) and Maureen Daniels peak through the life rings they were presented as "Auxiliarist of the Year" honorees.

"I embraced my new Auxiliary family and the Coast Guard goal of promoting boating safety, especially here in my own back yard, Lake Anna," Daniels said. "So much for retirement, when you find something rewarding to do with people you respect and enjoy, you can't help but get involved and want to do your part."

Daniels appreciates the being able to pair her love of the water with a commitment to her community, friends and neighbors. She is also president of her homeowners' association and supports the Lake Anna Business Partnership and the Lake Anna Civic Association and their efforts to protect and promote Lake Anna.

"Thanks to the commitment and flexibility of our coxswains, crew members and radio watch-standers, we are able to consistently assist the boating public weekends and holidays, Memorial Day through Labor Day," Daniels said.

She encourages anyone with an interest in boating safety and helping others on the lake to join the Auxiliary. "Bring your life skills and experiences and the Coast Guard will provide training for the special skills you will need." she said. "If you already have skills in computer or cooking, we have a need for those talents, too."

Gena Kunz

Kunz is privileged to have been awarded the Auxiliarist of the Year for a second time, the first occurred in 2006. She joined the Auxiliary in December 2005 after retiring and relocating to the lake full-time, following her husband, Rich, who was already a member. But, her experience goes back many years. She took her boating safety course in 1967 and had admired the work of the Coast Guard, what they stood for and their interest in promoting boating safety.

"This is a distinct honor to have all your effort recognized." Kunz said. "There are many others in our Flotilla who, I feel, could just as easily be given this award. We work hard and well together."

As a member of the Auxiliary, Kunz has taken advantage of the many training activities offered. She is a certified vessel examiner, crew, coxswain, private aid verifier and communications specialist. She has also taken the Goodmate Program for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection and the AUX-10 School course, a Coast Guard course for data entry taught on a limited number of Coast Guard bases throughout the United States for Information System Officers. Kunz attended the course at Cape May, New Jersey and has also earned two sustained service awards.

Kunz has served in the local organization as the Personnel Service officer recruiting new members and as the Information Systems officer, entering all of the Flotilla hours and missions in the government's AUX-DATA system. At the Blue Ridge Division level, she has been the Assistant Information Systems officer and the Officer in Charge for Lake Anna SARDET, the Search and Rescue Detachment station located near the dam at the eastern end of the lake.

The retired radiological technician spent many years in the hospital setting conducting CAT scans, interventional, vascular and special procedure radiography, and operative and general radiography.

Kunz is looking forward to promoting boating safety and getting the Lake Anna SARDET in the best possible shape to perform all necessary functions in 2009. The dock at the facility was revamped and extended in 2008 and additional improvements have been made at the site recently.

"A new communications tower is now in the works and should be completed prior to the boating season," Kunz said. "This will enable radio communications with the entire lake and communications with the Coast Guard stations at Milford Havens and Hampton Roads. Should we have a disaster, such as a hurricane, on the coast, we may be asked to cover radio watch for them from our inland base."

Kunz also encourages anyone interested in promoting boating safety and protecting the lake and its boating public to consider joining the Auxiliary.

"Not to follow in my footsteps, but to find your own area of interest where you are comfortable working." Kunz said. "We are just another set of eyes and ears looking for areas of concern on the lake. We cannot be too careful after Sept. 11."

The Auxiliary has many options for volunteers with activities ranging from teaching boating safety classes to inspecting boats for safety requirements and recommendations, going on boating safety patrols, operating the radios at SARDET and communicating with the boats on safety patrol and any other boaters in distress on Lake Anna, towing boats to safety that have broken down, rescuing boaters and providing perimeter support for the fireworks, regatta and other special incidents for law enforcement, if needed.

The Auxiliary also has a program known as AUX-Chef available to members teaching them how to prepare food for Coast Guard and Auxiliary occasions. Upon completion, an Auxiliarist can relieve a chef on a Coast Guard station or vessel or work in another capacity at the station.

"There are many new ways popping up every year that we can help the Coast Guard," Kunz said.