

# Handbook for Coast Guard Spouses' Clubs

## First Edition

This publication was created in May 2017 by the National Council of Coast Guard Spouses' Clubs (NCCGSC) to assist in the formation of new spouses' clubs and re-energize existing groups to help spouses enrich their Coast Guard experience. It is also filled with helpful information, guidelines, and new ideas. It covers guidelines for starting, organization and structure recommendations, expectations, ideas for programs, activities, service projects, and fund-raising. All questions should be sent to the NCCGSC.

More importantly, this document exists to help our spouses organize and manage Spouses' Clubs. If you have a suggestion to improve the Handbook, please send your suggestions to the National Council at <mailto:nationalcouncilofcgsc@gmail.com>

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Introduction
- Getting Started
- Leadership Roles
- Effective Meetings
- Membership and Participation
- Communicating with Spouses' Club Members
- Newsletters
- Financial Guidance
- Supporting a Spouses' Club
- Fundraising
- Spouses' Club Group Activities
- Emergency Preparedness
  
- Appendix A- Spouses' Club Checklist
- Appendix B – First Meeting Checklist
- Appendix C – Sample Agenda and Minutes
- Appendix D – Fundraising Checklist

## **Introduction**

The Coast Guard recognizes that contributions made by families are an essential part of our Service. The support spouses provide to our members to assist them in performing their military duty is a source of strength and inspiration. Spouses' clubs have four main goals: provide a support system, create fellowship opportunities, offer community service, and furnish educational information. All clubs seek to improve the quality of life of their members, while promoting the feeling of belonging to the Coast Guard community. Spouses' clubs, also referred to as "spouse associations," include the spouses of all Coast Guard Service members regardless of the sponsor's rank and pay grade.

When families of Coast Guard service members are made aware of available resources, have the opportunity to socialize, and can draw on the strength of new friends, coping skills are enhanced and anxiety is reduced. A group that works well promotes a team effort and brings out the best of each individual in what can be a challenging military life-style. Lasting friendships, the satisfaction of helping others and a sense of pride are all positive results of belonging to a strong spouses' club.

### **Spouses' Clubs Background**

The purpose of a spouses' club is to help plan, coordinate, and conduct informational, care-taking, morale-building and social activities to enhance preparedness, and command mission readiness and to increase the resiliency and well-being of Coastguardsmen and their families.

Spouses' clubs are vitally important organizations that can significantly contribute to improved awareness of and access to reliable and useful information, resources, and services that support and enrich the lives of Coast Guard families and service members. Spouses' clubs provide important community outreach for newcomers. For example, clubs can provide newly assigned families with relocation related information to reduce the stress from recent moves. Clubs may support the unit's Ombudsman, assist with sponsor or orientation programs, conduct or coordinate community service projects, update relocation packages, provide community support in emergent situations, and provide other types of support based on the unique needs of their local community. Spouses' clubs may offer programs or services that complement appropriated-fund or non-appropriated-fund activities on an installation, but they should not compete with such programs. Military spouses clearly have a vested interest in these activities as well as other related aspects of military life.

Spouses' clubs support Coast Guard Work-Life programs by participating in selected family-related initiatives and sponsoring workshops or other training opportunities related to service benefits. Spouses' clubs can serve as a contingency resource for Work-Life events when morale, well-being and recreation (MWR) funding is not available or authorized. Any gifts from a spouse club must be treated and processed as a gift offer to the Coast Guard and are to be resolved in accordance with the guidance on gift acceptance policies.

## **The National Council**

The Coast Guard recognizes the integral part spouses' clubs can play in granting a sense of belonging and community to families by providing support and fellowship or offering education or community service.

The National Council of Coast Guard Spouses' Clubs is an advisory group that provides guidance and development of spouses' clubs across the country. The council assists in affiliating with Coast Guard commands, which is required of clubs that would like to identify themselves with a particular duty station. It also acts as a central location to find and connect with spouses' clubs.

The council stands by to assist at any stage a club may be in, from offering advice as the club begins and develops bylaws or providing support during the dissolution of an inactive club. The advisory group, which is located in Washington, D.C., also serves as a liaison between clubs and the Coast Guard Office of Work/Life staff.

## **References**

COMDTINST 1750.6 (series) (currently 1750.6D, dated 30 January 2015), Coast Guard Spouses' Clubs details the policy and guidance for Spouses' Clubs. The instruction uses the following references:

- Coast Guard Ombudsman Program, COMDTINST 1750.4 (series)
- Acceptance and Accounting for Special Projects and Other Gifts to the Coast Guard from Non-Federal Sources, COMDTINST 5760.14 (series)
- Standards of Ethical Conduct, COMDTINST M5370.8 (series)
- 5 C.F.R. Part 2635
- Coast Guard Morale, Well-Being, and Recreation Manual, COMDTINST M1710.13 (series)
- Coast Guard External Affairs Manual, COMDTINST M5700.13 (series)
- Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment and Services, COMDTINST 5375.1 (series)

## **Policy**

- Spouses' clubs are private associations: COMDTINST 1750.6D does not establish rights or benefits to develop a spouses' club at a specific Coast Guard unit. Commanding officers are authorized to sanction the development of local spouses' clubs at their command. The Commanding Officer and Officers-In-Charge (OIC) should refer to Coast Guard Morale, Well-Being, and Recreation Manual, COMDTINST M1710.13 (series) for guidance on administration and oversight of private associations.
- Spouses' clubs may be established with no involvement from the Coast Guard. However, when operating in Coast Guard facilities, clubs must obtain the permission of the unit Commanding Officer in writing and are subject to the constraints and requirements regarding the use of Coast Guard facilities by private associations.

- While encouraged, the participation of spouses' clubs in Work-Life family awareness programs is voluntary. Clubs are encouraged to establish and maintain a point of contact with their local Coast Guard unit(s) and the servicing regional Work-Life staff to ensure vital family readiness information is relayed to the club. Establishing similar contact with the District, Sector, or Base Support Unit Chaplains, to increase awareness of available chaplain support services, is also encouraged.
- Commands are authorized to support spouses' club efforts by providing suitable space for meetings (when available) and co-sponsoring work-shops, symposiums, and other forums designed to provide comprehensive information and referral services on a wide range of family-related programs.
- Coast Guard appropriated and non-appropriated funds cannot be used to support spouses' clubs.
- Commands cannot routinely permit spouses' clubs to use Coast Guard non-appropriated fund office equipment or appropriated fund office equipment for spouses' club purposes. However, if the spouses' club purpose is not to conduct internal spouses' club business, but instead is to benefit all members of the command, commands are permitted to allow spouses' clubs to use non-appropriated fund office equipment and appropriated fund office equipment on a no-cost, not-to-interfere basis. The term "office equipment" does not include the official Coast Guard e-mail system either for incoming or outgoing spouses' club email. Commands can allow spouses' clubs to use the unit's mailing address (but not e-mail address) as the spouses' club mailing address.
- Units are prohibited from giving a spouses' club unit members' home addresses, personal e-mail, or any personally identifiable information (PII).
- Ombudsmen may not hold any position in their local spouses' club, but may be a member and participate as part of the membership.

#### **Use of Command Name and Coast Guard Seals, Logos, or Insignia**

- The spouses' club may use the name of the command in the name of the club, with the approval of the CO/OIC.
- Spouses' clubs may not use the seals, logos, or insignia of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), USCG components, or USCG commands/units on letterhead, correspondence, titles, or in association with any spouses' club program, location or activity. Community Relations Division, Commandant (CG-09223) may authorize the use of the Coast Guard emblem or mark in appropriate circumstances. Refer to the Coast Guard External Affairs Manual, COMDTINST M5700.13 (series) for additional information.

- The spouses' club status as a private association must be clearly identifiable. Printed material, websites, social media sites, and electronic media must include the prominent disclaimer:

“This is a non-federal entity. This non-federal entity is not part of, or endorsed by, the Department of Homeland Security or the United States Coast Guard and it has no governmental status.”

### **Fundraising Policies**

Spouses' clubs sanctioned by their commands must adhere to the following guidelines in all fundraising activities:

- Spouses' clubs will not solicit cash or non-cash donations on behalf of the command, or imply that the Coast Guard officially endorses their fundraising activity.
- As a private association, a spouses' club may fundraise. However, no Coast Guard member can officially endorse a Coast Guard spouses' club or engage in spouses' club fundraising activities in their official capacity.
- Spouses' club members may solicit cash and non-cash donations for the spouses' club from non-federal sources.
- Spouses' club members cannot solicit any cash or non-cash donation for the spouses' club from any non-federal source that is a “prohibited source.”
- Spouses' clubs may accept unsolicited cash or non-cash donations to the spouses' club from all non-federal sources, including prohibited sources.
- Spouses' club members, who also are a Coast Guard military member, may not wear his or her uniform for any face-to-face donation solicitation. No spouses' club member, who is also a military member or federal employee, is permitted to use his or her federal title, position, status, or authority to solicit any non-federal source for any cash or non-cash donation to the spouses' club. When soliciting a cash or non-cash donation for the spouses' club from non-federal sources, spouses' club members must inform each non-federal source that the spouses' club is not part of the Coast Guard and, instead, is an affiliated private association and that all donations are strictly voluntary.
- Spouses' clubs must obtain command permission to use Coast Guard property to conduct a fundraiser (e.g., baked goods sale, hot dog sale, car wash, etc.).
- Spouses' club members are prohibited from using orientation cruises, flights, or any other special access to Coast Guard real or personal property as a fundraising prize.

Commands with questions regarding the spouses' club fund raising activities should seek advice from their servicing legal office.

### **Dissolving the Spouses' Club**

There may be occasions when it is in the best interest of the spouses' club to disband. The club may be dissolved by vote of the members. Reasons for disbanding may include,

when the club has outlived its purpose, membership has significantly reduced, a command is being moved or closed. If the spouses' club dissolves the funds should be dispersed by expenditure on an activity for command families or donated to a charitable organization.

## **Getting Started**

Before a spouses' club can start planning gatherings and events, the focus of the club needs to be determined. Historically, there has been a variety of formal and informal clubs within Coast Guard commands.

A formally organized group meets all the needs for camaraderie and sharing of information, but functions with elected or appointed officers, by-laws, and formal committees. In general, structured organizations work well in larger commands.

An informal, less-structured group can provide an opportunity for spouses to meet on a regular basis for camaraderie, getting up-to-date information, and forming new friendships. This works well for small commands as it does not require as many members to fill formal positions. Using a chairperson and committees is an option when organizing a small group. Generally, less structured groups have a volunteer chairperson to provide continuity for the group. The group, as a whole, plans what interests they would like to pursue. Committees can be formed to research interests from holiday parties to homecoming celebration.

### **Ombudsman**

The role of the Ombudsman is clearly defined in The Coast Guard Ombudsman Program Instruction, COMDTINST 1750.4E and while ombudsmen may not hold any official leadership roles, the ombudsman may help start or assist in revitalizing a struggling spouses' club.

### **Temporary Leadership**

Until your organization has an opportunity to hold elections, temporary officers or a chairperson could be selected to serve for one or two meetings until regular group elections can be held. In general, elected officers include President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. In larger groups, the position of Secretary may be divided into Recording Secretary (records notes of the meetings, etc.) and Corresponding Secretary (drafts letters, thank you notes, etc.)

When elections are held, all members of your group should have equal opportunities to run for all positions up for election.

## **Leadership Roles**

In a formal spouses' club, elected officers should consist at minimum of a president and a treasurer, but larger, more formalized groups may elect additional officers to lead the spouses' club. Each role can be established for optimal effectiveness. These roles can be outlined in your by-laws.

The following are some general guidelines and ideas on how each role might look. Turnover or pass-down information for each role should be given to incoming officers. Be sure to include all records of financial transactions and general information about the group that will help with the leadership transition.

### **President / Chair**

The president /chair represents the spouses' club at all times. This position requires an electee to be diplomatic, flexible, courteous and organized.

#### *Duties:*

- Know the current by-laws
- Prepare an agenda for the meeting
- Start and end meetings on time
- Open the building/room to be used for meeting or event
- Arranging the room
- Cleaning up
- Locking up
- Sign official correspondence
- Appoint committee chairs and maintain a list of committees
- Establish a working relationship with your official command liaison
- Recognize committee volunteers
- Delegate responsibility evenly throughout your group or among committee members

### **Vice President /Vice Chair**

In the president's absence, the vice president / vice chair traditionally performs the leadership duties for the club. Many groups have the vice president act as the program coordinator. The vice president may also act as a greeter at each meeting.

#### *Duties:*

- Chair the meeting in the president's absence
- Secure guest speakers
- Know by-laws of organization
- Coordinate publicity
- Perform other duties as assigned by your by-laws
- Be a neutral party to assist in all conflicts

### **Secretary**



The secretary is responsible for taking minutes at the meeting. Minutes are written records of your group's meetings and contain what was accomplished by the group. Minutes also provide information about the last meeting for those who were not able to attend.

*Duties:*

- Write minutes of the meetings – major accomplishments, questions, ideas, not verbatim conversations
- Proofread correspondence for content, grammar and spelling
- Read the minutes from the previous meeting at the next meeting
- Keep attendance records of participants
- Compose correspondence
- Maintain file of incoming and outgoing correspondence
- Keep a box, binder, or folder of official group business information
- Annually in August, report to the National Secretary the club's current officer listing and contact information.

The following information should be available to incoming command liaisons and officers:

- Minutes
- Committee reports
- Correspondence (copies)
- By-laws
- Attendance records

**Treasurer**

The treasurer manages the group's financial endeavors. Treasurers need to possess excellent bookkeeping skills and be transparent with their record-keeping.

*Duties:*

- Maintain records of all funds
- Provide a statement of finances as often as required
- Provide a complete financial report after an audit
- Reconcile bank statements every month
- Submit receipts within 30 days of purchase
- Deposit money within seven days of receipt
- Obtain information regarding tax-exempt status and setting up a checking account
- Do not hand out blank checks
- Audit accounts at least annually with designated reviewer
- Require two signatures on checks to maintain "checks and balances"

**Command Liaison**

The commanding officer may designate an official command liaison to the spouses' club to officially represent the command, and act in an advisory capacity to the spouses' club, in discussions of matters of mutual interest. In this manner, the command liaison serves

as a conduit of information between the command and the spouses' club. The command liaison may not direct or otherwise be involved in matters of management or control of the spouses' club. This liaison may be an officer, senior enlisted member, or civilian employee of the command.

*Duties:*

- Provide encouragement
- Provide command information, when appropriate, and knowledge of how spouses' clubs work
- Keep Sponsor CO/OIC/Command Liaison informed of spouses' club activities
- Share knowledge

**Ombudsman**

Spouses' club board members and ombudsmen have separate and distinct responsibilities. The ombudsman is an official Coast Guard representative tasked with improving mission readiness through family readiness. The ombudsman may collaborate with the spouses' club on behalf of the command, but shall not serve as a spouses' club officer.

Additionally, the Ombudsman may participate in the spouses' club in a personal capacity, but not as the official Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is usually the spouse of a service member with the command appointed by the CO to provide information and referrals for local military and civilian resources to family members. See Coast Guard Ombudsman Program, COMDTINST 1750.4 (series) for information.

*Duties:*

- Provide information on resources and referrals
- Communicate command information
- Maintain confidentiality
- Provide encouragement to and inspire camaraderie among command families

**Program Coordinator**

The program coordinator, often the vice president, is responsible for asking guest speakers to address your group. Here are some steps to guide the program coordinator's activities:

- Learn what topics the participants are interested in and what their specific needs to be addressed
- Find who can provide the information.
- Secure a speaker. Contact HSWL Work-Life for further guidance and possible topics
- Verify the date, time, and place of your meeting for the speaker
- Greet your speaker at the door
- Introduce your speaker to the officers of your group
- Thank your speaker for attending your meeting and send a thank-you note within a week after the program

### **Chairperson and Committees**

Using a committee chairperson is an option when organizing a small group (fewer than 15 members). The chairperson hosts the committee meetings. The group plans and decides what interests they would like to pursue. Committees can then be formed to address specific tasks such as fundraising, handling publicity and organizing holiday parties or the homecoming celebration. A popular structure is a committee chairperson-at-large with committee chairs under them. Participants in the group can join any committee in which they have an interest.

Serving on a committee is important, and accepting a committee chair position is a challenging commitment. Many people will depend on you to get the job done. Working on a major project is fun and rewarding, especially when you see the results of your efforts. Successful chairs and committee members have these traits in common:

- Dependable
- Problem-solve
- Meet deadlines
- Communicate effectively
- Work for the benefit of the group

### **Standing Committees or Special Functions**

- Welcoming Committee is comprised of spouses' club members (not necessarily officers) who agree to welcome new members to spouses' club meetings, make hospital visits, and visit a new mom or new members at home. Members may put together and hand out "goodie bags" of appropriate small items for the occasion. Members may also send out birthday, get well, or other greeting cards.
- Communications or Publicity Committee is comprised of one or more members who prepare meeting announcements, news items and articles for publication in the ombudsman or command newsletter, act as webmaster for the clubs Web page, and otherwise handle communication and publicity.
- Special Events Committee will assist the program coordinator in planning special activities and events for the group that may include holiday parties, homecoming events and group picnics.
- Fundraising Committee will plan and arrange for fundraisers for the group, researching the applicable local regulations, obtaining necessary permissions, and arranging and managing logistics for the event.

## **Effective Meetings**

Meetings may be informal or formal depending on the size of the group. If the group is small. There are several books available at most libraries that can provide information on parliamentary procedures. "Robert's Rules of Order" and "Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance" are two worth considering.

### **Meeting Places**

A meeting can take place anywhere. The meeting can take place on a regularly scheduled

day or evening, on the weekend, or can work around the command's schedule. Either the spouses' club chairperson, president, or other appointed person should be responsible for finding an appropriate meeting place, checking to see if fees are involved, and reserve the room and time. Keep in mind when planning meetings and get-togethers that not all members can afford (or want) to pay continually to attend. Try to vary your events, activities, and meetings between fee and non-fee to avoid this issue. The following are some ideas and suggestions:

- Military Base or Station
- HSWL Regional Office or another service branch family support center
- Local USO
- Room at the Chapel
- Picnic pavilions
- Community centers
- Local schools
- Local restaurant

### **Conducting Meetings**

- In a structured organization, it is generally written into the by-laws when meetings will be held. It can be as specific as the “2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday morning of the month” or as general as “once a month”. In less structured groups, meetings often occur around the command's schedule. Whatever your club decides on, remember to consider members with small children and those who work outside the home.
- If you have a guest speaker or business to attend to during a meeting, keep the social time to a minimum at the beginning of the meetings. In addition, it is suggested that you conduct any business at the end of the meeting so the guest speaker does not have to participate in the business part of the meeting and is free to leave once the presentation is completed.
- When you have your first meeting, have a get-acquainted period. During this time, you may consider serving refreshments such as beverages and a light snack, but this is not required.
- Nametags are helpful at all meetings and allow new members to put names to faces and feel more at ease.

### **Helpful Suggestions**

- Maintain communication with the command liaison (if one is appointed, if not, asked that one be appointed). Let the command cadre and their spouse know they are welcome to attend or speak to the group.
- Protect any social rosters or lists with personal identifiable information of spouses' club members. Everyone should be aware that such lists are for the private use of the members and are not for distribution for any purpose. The command and the ombudsman cannot share command roster information with a

spouses' club.

- By-laws should reflect the simplest way of running a meeting to keep order and to have a process of decision-making. Keeping by-laws uncomplicated with limited rules and regulations will help the group run most efficiently. Sample bylaws are available at The National Council of Coast Guard Spouses' Clubs website <http://nationalcouncilofcgsc.org>

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict is an unavoidable part of everyday life. Some guideline to remember in resolving conflicts:

- Make sure you agree on the use of terms/definitions
- Build on areas of mutual agreement
- Determine the specific changes necessary for a satisfactory resolution of the issues
- Avoid personal attacks
- Stick to the issues

There will be times when the spouses' club president must help resolve conflicts between members, but this should be done only when necessary. It is best to solve conflict at the lowest level. This means allowing the members involved to work out their own disagreements if they can.

### **Icebreakers**

As the saying goes, "it's a small world." The purpose of icebreakers is to give people the opportunity to get to know each other and find out what they have in common. Even if participants do know each other, it is still a great way to start meetings.

### **Questions for Participants**

Answering questions, helps start discussions and increases comfort levels between members. Questions should be general in nature and not too personal. Have participants take turns going around the room, giving their names and responses to questions like:

- What is your home state?
- How many children do you have?
- Where did you meet your spouse?
- What is your favorite food?

### **Name Tent or Name Tag Activity**

Fold sheets of construction paper into thirds, forming long tents. Have participants write their names on the front of the tents and draw their hobbies on the reverse side. Participants then walk around the room to introduce themselves and guess one another's hobbies. There are probably other people in the room with similar interests. Another option is to use nametags. Have participants put their names and hobbies on the front of a nametag.

### **Who am I?**

Pin the name of a famous person on the back of each group member. Have everyone ask questions requiring “yes” or “no” answers of one another for a preset amount of time. At the end of the time limit, go around the room, starting with you, and have everyone guess who they are. Keep the game as simple as possible by using themes – famous couples, star athletes, actors or other recognizable celebrities.

## **Membership and Participation**

Spouses' Club members are comprised of family members, Coastguardsmen (active duty and reserve), and civilians associated with the command and its personnel.

Participation in your group is based upon several factors, including stateside or overseas location, and whether the command is deployed or in port. Typically, participation will grow as commands get ready to deploy and will decline after the deployment. This is because of the perception that support of the group is no longer needed when the command returns from deployment. Keeping the basic structure of the group is an important factor when it starts to become active again. Develop an annual or strategic plan and work with the command to keep activities varied; it may help membership grow and/or stabilize.

Group members may be low. Many spouses work and/or volunteer, and some may not choose to participate in the spouses' club. It is not the numbers that are important. It is the sense of command support, camaraderie and friendship that makes even a small group successful.

### **Ideas for Participation and Membership**

- Publicize your group and events as widely as possible. A notice in base newspapers, e-mail and personal phone calls are successful tools. Two to four weeks' notice before an event gives participants plenty of time to plan.
- Request to use the command newsletter (s) to promote your group, its purpose, accomplishments and schedules activities. Remember to include the meeting time, place and phone number or e-mail for a point of contact.
- Send a welcome letter to new spouses through command Welcome Aboard Packets. A letter given to service members at their ship indoctrination is another way to let them know about your group and what activities are planned.
- Assign someone to greet new members and make them feel welcome and comfortable at meetings. This is one of the most important aspects of success for your group. New members may not return to another meeting if they feel unwelcome or ignored.
- Offer a ride share. Some spouses may not be familiar with the area. Offer a ride to

those who may not come to a meeting because they are unsure about its location.

- Use a questionnaire to gather ideas for activities that would interest group members. If the activities are fun, varied and cost effective, you will please most of the people most of the time.
- Keep participants actively involved in the group by inviting them to join various committees. Be careful not to pressure people into a committee role. You want volunteers who are interested in the job. A person who has been volunteered may not be effective if they are uninterested or lack the skills to fit the position or task. If participants feel a sense of belonging and contributing to the group, they will take ownership of their commitments and ensure a productive organization.
- Show shipboard videotapes at your meetings. Encourage spouses to attend and see their service member.
- Sponsor a "Bring a Spouse" night and give away prizes.
- Offer interesting topics for discussion. Hosting speakers to facilitate discussion of a wide variety of topics is fun and can be a draw for your meetings. Typical topics of interest are deployment, parenting and financial planning.
- Offer variety in your meetings. Alternating business, craft, potluck and outside social events will satisfy your group's interests.
- For Spouses' clubs formed around afloat or deploying units, consider meeting every other month or quarterly when the command is in port.

## **Communicating with Spouses' Club Members**

### **Operational Security (OPSEC)**

Whether communicating on a social media site, by phone or in public, always limit the amount of personal information you discuss. Spouses' clubs should remain vigilant in not volunteering any information that could put service members in harm's way. Do not discuss sensitive information such as ship/unit movements, personnel rosters, training/deployment schedules or anything else that may compromise the personal privacy of the crews, their families and the command's mission. Deployed, as well as daily operations, are in many cases classified and spouses' club members should recognize the importance of keeping sensitive information secure. Remind family members to be aware of what they are posting online and educate them about OPSEC. Family OPSEC information can be found at:

[http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/ombudsman\\_family\\_resources.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/ombudsman_family_resources.asp)

## **Websites**

Spouses' clubs may provide information to be posted on the command's official website or a spouses' club website may be linked to the command website if it contains official information. The spouses' club website may not contain commercial endorsements or attachments if linked to the command website. The spouses' club website may contain links to other websites containing useful information for family members, even if those websites contain commercial links. Web links to outside sites will advise users that they are exiting a USCG website and that the USCG does not endorse the outside website.

## **Increasing Participation**

One way to attract potential spouses' club members is by making personal phone calls. Identify volunteers who are willing to call 10 to 12 other Spouses' club members. Provide them with a list of individuals to call and a written message to be relayed. Below is a sample message:

*Hello, Emily, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I am the Spouses' Club [position]. Is this a good time to call? Good. [If not, get a time to call back and thank her for her time.] I'm calling to say 'hello' and invite you to our upcoming Spouses' Club meeting at [time, date and location]. [Pause for Emily's response, if any.] We will be discussing our plans for \_\_\_\_\_ for the year. In addition, I'm looking for a few more volunteers to help with our Spouses' Club events. By the way, do you have any thoughts or ideas about the Spouses' Club that you want to discuss at the meeting? [Listen for her answer.] OK, I'll write that down and make sure it's on the agenda. Well, thanks for talking with me, Emily. If you need to contact me about anything, my number is \_\_\_\_\_. Please feel free to call. I look forward to meeting you at the meeting. Goodbye."*

## **Phone Tree and E-mail List**

Phone and e-mail "trees" are a great way for spouses' clubs to communicate quickly with members. They are called trees because the message goes out to a few people, who call a few more people, and so forth, such that the message branches out to the whole group. Participation for both must be voluntary.

NOTE: The command and ombudsmen cannot share official roster information with the spouses' club.

Advertise the phone and/or email tree at command indoctrinations or all hands events, and consider attending and presenting the information if the Command will allow it. If not, ask that the Command Liaison, Senior Enlisted (Command "Gold Badge" or Command "Silver Badge" as appropriate) to provide the spouses' club coordinator's phone number and e-mail address to service members to reinforce the command support. Advertise these communication methods at your meetings and deployment briefs, so all spouses know they exist. Ask the ombudsman to advertise them in their newsletter. You may also ask the command to advertise in the newsletter.

Phone trees and e-mail lists are used to notify group members of upcoming meetings and social events. Members of the spouses' club may not use phone or e-mail trees for their own financial benefit such as for sales or solicitations.



A spouses' club officer calls the phone/e-mail tree committee chairperson to activate the phone tree. The committee chairperson calls each volunteer who is a branch of the tree, who has been given a list of names. In turn, these volunteers call each group member on their list.

### **Social Media**

Online social networks present communicators with enhanced access and increased opportunities to reach out to unit family members. The club's President or Chairperson should promote and maintain an expectation of respect from users and be vigilant in enforcing OPSEC rules for privacy and safety.

Consider the following for inclusion on a spouses' club Facebook page:

Welcome to the [NAME OF SPOUSES' CLUB]'s Facebook page. This page is intended to provide updated information and discussion on the [NAME OF SPOUSES' CLUB]. Please visit our home page at [HOMEPAGE URL].

While this is an open forum, it is also a family friendly one, so please keep your comments and wall posts clean. In addition to keeping it family friendly, we ask that you follow our posting guidelines as set forth here. Comments and posts that do not follow these guidelines will be removed:

- We do not allow graphic, obscene, explicit, or racial comments or submissions, nor do we allow comments that are abusive, hateful or intended to defame anyone or our organization
- We do not allow comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity
- Apparent spam will be removed and may cause the author (s) to be blocked from the page without notice
- You participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your user name and any information provided
- Never post personal information about members without their permission. Help protect their privacy
- Never post details about command deployments or operations. Revealing such information may threaten operational security

The appearance of external links on this site does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the USCG.

Thank you for your interest in and support of the men and women of the [NAME OF SPOUSES' CLUB]

## **Newsletters**

The ombudsman or the command may produce newsletters. To make sure the club's message reaches everyone in the command, take time each month to write a short paragraph to incorporate into the newsletter. Some commands support the dissemination

of a separate spouses' club newsletter. A spouses' club committee may be established to coordinate production, collect information and maintain dissemination of birthday/special occasion lists for command families. Talk with your command to see how you can make newsletters an effective tool for communicating with command families.

Items you may want to include:

- Mark your calendar - Dates and times of upcoming events, such as spouse group meetings, board meetings, command sponsored fundraising events and socials.
- Special acknowledgements - Welcome new spouses and note farewells to departing spouses. A special section of birthdays/special events is nice for families to see in the newsletter.
- Chef's corner - Highlight a member's favorite recipe for all spouses and families to share.
- Year in review - In January, publish a year in review article to highlight the activities of the command and the Spouses' club. Incoming families will see the accomplishments, and it may generate interest in your group.
- Message from the CO/XO or CMC - Invite the CO/XO or CMC to write an article for your newsletter. The same applies to the CO/XO or CMC spouses.
- Tip of the month - Provide tips on home/auto maintenance, gardening, places to visit or eat, etc.

There are three main newsletter styles to choose from when developing a newsletter: letter, newspaper, and combination.

**Letter:** Letter style is the quickest and easiest to produce. Short paragraphs and the occasional use of emphasis type (boldface, italics) helps readers remain interested. The length is usually one to two pages.

**Newspaper:** Newspaper style is the most time-consuming style to produce. This style most closely resembles a professional publication. It contains larger, bolder headlines, artwork, calendars, news stories and special columns and has a specially prepared banner. The usual length is four to eight pages.

**Combination:** Combination style blends the letter and newspaper styles. It may be printed on letterhead stationery or on paper with a special newsletter banner. Occasional pieces of artwork may be added to emphasize a special theme or to give a seasonal flair. Length is usually two to four pages.

Newsletters should be eye-catching and meaningful to the reader. The following are some basic guidelines and/or tips for creating newsletters:

- Banner
  - Choose a descriptive title and subtitle.
  - Isolate or emphasize important words.
  - Choose appropriate typography.

- Use secondary words to add graphic contrast.
- Carefully select banner size and position.
- Columns
  - If space in the newsletter is at a premium, consider using two or three column formats. Most word processing programs will automatically format columns.
- Artwork and Lines
  - Use artwork relevant to the adjacent text. Do not use artwork to fill white space. Size it proportionally.
  - Lines and borders are the most effective graphic aids. They highlight text, give the page a sense of order, and direct the reader's eye to information you want to highlight.
- Effective Design
  - Keep pages uncomplicated and the overall design clean.
  - Put short items in groups. Use graphics only when they have a purpose.
  - Keep headlines and subheadings consistent in style and size.
  - Vary the size of artwork, photos and headlines. Put boxes and shading around important items.
- Font Styles
  - Serif fonts are highly readable:
    - Times New Roman
    - Garamond
    - Book Antiqua
  - Sans serif fonts are perceived as modern, cosmopolitan, scientific and up-to-date but are read with less accuracy:
    - Arial
    - Verdana
    - Century Gothic
  - Variety within the same font family is fine (italics, bold, other point sizes). Variety among typefaces (mixing completely different families) creates a hodgepodge effect. Remember, a single font may come in:
    - Boldface
    - Italic
    - Small Caps
- Using all caps for body text is more difficult to read than using uppercase and lowercase characters:
  - Text in all caps takes up to one-third more line space than standard lettering.
  - **TEXT IN ALL CAPS TAKES UP TO ONE-THIRD MORE LINE SPACING THAN STANDARD LETTERING AND MORE INK IF PRINTED.**

### **Effective Headlines**

Choose short, concise words for headlines. Express one thought only– the most important story idea. Capture the story. Do not be so brief that readers miss the idea or are misled. Is it understandable? Avoid standard, repetitive headlines. Be impartial. Leave out puns and rhymes.

### **Proofreading**

Proofreading is difficult work. Always ask someone else to proofread the newsletter. It is difficult for the person who created the material to see errors because they are too familiar with the product. A proofreader should read material one element at a time. Read all of the body copy, then the headlines, then all the extra material such as page numbers.

Check for trouble spots when proofreading:

- Spelling
- Consistency
- Commas
- Periods
- Capitalization
- Quotation marks
- Apostrophes
- Numbers
- Headings

## **Financial Guidance**

The information contained in this section is not legal guidance, but rather an overview of how spouses' club have operated in the past for their specific circumstances. If you have questions, please consult with the National Council and if needed, we will recommend contacting legal advisors. Neither the National Council nor Coast Guard legal can provide specific legal support to a club, but we can provide information to help you navigate the club's specific situation.

Some general notes:

- Should we be a nonprofit or not for profit organization?
  - The National Council is NOT a nonprofit or not for profit organization, so there is no status that can be conferred to a local club that is affiliated with the National Council.
  - Depending on the goals, membership and other details of the formation of your spouses' club, you may qualify to seek IRS non-profit or not for profit organization status.
    - If you seek this status, understand upfront that there is an administrative burden that must be managed to seek certification and maintain it. For small clubs, this might be too much work.
  - If you are a nonprofit or not for profit organization, you may seek donations that potentially have tax donation benefits for those donating to

your club. Often, businesses or individuals will donate to your club and claim the donation on their taxes. In such cases, the club must provide proof of their status and IRS regulations require documentation of donations (another administrative duty).

- If you do not have that status, those donating cannot seek tax benefits. When seeking support from businesses, organizations or individuals, you should be clear at to your status.
- There is no requirement to maintain a club checking or savings account. If a club decides to maintain an account to support their activities, everyone must remember that the transactions of that account must be open to scrutiny by all members of the club and more importantly, show that the money is supporting the purpose of the club as stated in its bylaws.

Should the club to decide that maintaining a bank account is to their advantage, here are some things to keep in mind:

- The establishment of an account should be made with “checks and balances” in mind. Establish written procedures on how funds will be dispersed (ex – voted on by general membership). No one person should be able to authorize an expenditure, execute the expenditure and then account for the expenditure. For example, the general membership might authorize an expenditure, the Treasurer will spend the money and the Vice President /Vice Chair receives the bank statements to verify the expenditure. Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) for nonprofit or not for profits can be found online.
- If your club does establish an account, the Treasurer shall report the status of the account to the membership on a regular basis as established by the club. This can be as simple as a report made at each meeting or more detailed such as a quarterly audit.
- If you are a certified nonprofit or not for profit by the IRS, you will have very specific reporting requirements that must be adhered to.
- Transactions in the account should be clearly identifiable as supporting the club’s stated purpose and in no situation, should it appear that club members are financially benefiting from the activities of the club.

## **Supporting a Spouses’ Club**

There are several ways to secure financial and logistical support and fund a spouses’ club. They may include:

- Dues or membership fees - Most groups do not charge dues because it may discourage membership. Groups that have a membership fee often offer scholarships. Members may wish to donate to the spouses’ club. Donations are strictly voluntary, and no one should ever coerce any member to donate.
- Donations - Area businesses can make unsolicited or solicited donations. Such donations are usually in the form of free or discounted products. Spouses’ clubs

may never accept a gift on the behalf of the command or the U.S. Coast Guard. Receipt of all gifts should be in accordance with the spouses' club by-laws.

- Fundraisers - Unit commanding officer (CO) must approve spouses' club fundraising events held within command spaces. The Base CO must approve fundraisers held elsewhere on the base.
- Command Support - The command may be able to provide limited logistical support. If resources allow, the CO may authorize the following:
  - The use of installation facilities at no charge
  - Use of government equipment (e.g. tables, chairs, and PA system)
  - Provide command speakers for spouses' club events
  - Incorporating spouses' club information in the command/ombudsman newsletter, or welcome aboard publications
  - Posting spouses' club information on the command's official website, or a spouses' club website may be linked to the command website

### **Setting Up a Spouses' Club Fund Account:**

- Treasurer applies for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from IRS (if applicable, not all clubs will form as non-profits).
- Treasure applies for a state sales tax exception (if applicable).
- Select a bank.
- Decide authorized users.
- Prepare authorization letter for bank.
- Open the account.

## **Fundraising**

Spouses' clubs are self-sustaining and, from time to time, will need to raise money to support their activities. Fundraising can be fun and enjoyed by all. Before planning a fundraiser, your club should have a specific focus and purpose for raising funds. Note: The base or unit Commanding Officer, depending on location, must approve on-base fundraisers.

- Tell club members the reason for the fundraiser. For example, the money will be used to cost-share the price of tickets to local attractions, pay for halfway-celebration activities, or cater general membership meetings.
- Marketing is another important factor. Groups are sometimes limited by where they can sell their items. Make sure there is a market for what you make or develop. For example, cookbooks are fun to put together, however, if the command is small, you may not be able to sell all the cookbooks you have ordered. Do the homework! Determining the cost, who will buy it and where it will be sold, are important decisions that need to be made before you go ahead with any moneymaking activity.
- In general, keeping fundraising efforts simple with give your club the most

payout. Keep in mind the size of the unit(s) you serve and the skills of your group.

The majority of the money raised should be used to fund projects and plans within a six-month or one-year period to benefit the members who have contributed their time, effort and money before they leave the command. If ever in doubt, always refer to your command liaison.

### **Ideas for Fundraising**

- Have a “Make it, Bake it, Grow it” sale at a meeting: Each person brings an item from one of those categories, and everyone bids on them.
- Design a T-shirt: Make sure your T-shirt design is not in competition with any designs being sold by the Coast Guard. Be aware of copyright and trademark laws.
- Bake Sale: Hold a bake sale at your meeting, at the command, on base, or in the community.
- Create a holiday themed basket: Sell tickets raffle style and pick a winner.
- Additional Ideas that clubs have used: Pizza sale on base, key chains, silent auctions, throw blankets, lunch bags.

### **Spouses' Club Group Activities**

Building a unified spouses' club is necessary for maintaining good teamwork. Joint activities are one way to build a team and cultivate teamwork. This section includes some ideas from previous spouses' clubs.

#### **Program and Activity Ideas**

This is just a list to get you started, based on activities that other spouses' clubs have found to be fun and successful. With a little imagination from you and your group, the list will grow.

- Invite guest speakers to your group to present a topic during meetings
- Learn a craft or a new recipe
- Meet socially at the movies, for coffee or at the gym
- Attend command picnics and parties
- Make a calendar for the year using an annual plan
- Dine-out and follow up with a play, movie or sporting event
- Go bowling. Go for one night or form a team on a league
- Be a tourist and see the local sights
- Learn simple car-maintenance tips from the base hobby shop or other trained mechanics
- House/home maintenance. Find handy maintenance tips to share at a meeting
- Come as you are. Call everyone over for an impromptu get-together
- Have a fun evening with good food

- Hold an auction. Everyone brings a “white elephant” (a usable, inexpensive item). Participants “bid” on items by placing a dime in a basket that circulates around the room. Set a timer for a random amount of time, and when it goes off, the last person to put a dime in the basket gets the item
- Rent movies
- Pop popcorn and sit on the floor. Have each member bring a favorite movie
- Play cards and games. Pinochle, Spades and Monopoly are favorites
- New recipe night. This is the time for everyone to try those great-sounding recipes they have been reluctant to fix because they did not want to eat it for a week. Everyone prepares a new recipe for the meal
- Salad night. Guests bring prepared items for a salad
- Garden or plant exchange. Everyone brings a plant or cutting to exchange
- Learn a craft. Have members of your club share their craft with the rest of the group
- Security night. Have a police officer talk about car, home and personal safety
- Shared albums. Share your life with the group– each member tells a story about his or her life
- Spouse jigsaw puzzles. Take a picture of each spouse and cut it into a jigsaw puzzle (or have it made professionally). This can also be a group picture for everyone to work on together
- Care packages. Have each spouse bake a dozen cookies or other sweets and send them to the command to be shared by all. Single Sailors will enjoy the gesture as well
- Decorative pillowcases. Have computer-image photographs of spouses imprinted on pillowcases or decorate the pillowcases using permanent markers or inks
- Handprint hankies. Have the children draw pictures or put their handprints on handkerchiefs. Sew them together and send to the ship for display on the mess decks
- Healthy outings. Hiking, biking, walking and other outside activities are a great way to keep busy and be healthy and active. A group of friends makes it more fun
- Calendar days. Create a calendar page for each month with messages on special dates for deployed members. Mail to deployed command
- Collage. Gather pictures from the families of as many members as possible. Organize them into a collage for display in a prominent place with the deployed command for all to enjoy

### **Welcome Aboard Coffee/Tea/Social**

Welcome Aboard events are great ways to kick off the start of a new club year. It brings together existing members with potential new members. They are excellent opportunities to install the new spouses' club officers.

### **Using Coast Guard Facilities for Spouse Club Events**

A great place to hold a Welcome Aboard event is Admiral's Quarters or a Commanding Officer's home. It shows support for the club by the most senior leaders in the Coast Guard. However, the Coast Guard is not obligated to host spouse club events at Coast



Guard facilities, nor are Commanding Officers required to host spouse club events at their home, but when spouse clubs maintain good relations with their Coast Guard sponsors, the clubs often find themselves invited to these places.

Whether the invitation is to the Club as a whole or as individual Coast Guard spouses, remember that “an invite is a thoughtful request of your presence to enrich the event you’re being asked to attend.”

An invitation to a community event or an event at a Representational Facilities (REPFAC), also known as “Flag Quarters” or a Commanding Officer’s home is an exciting opportunity. As is the case with any “exciting opportunities,” there are some important “Do’s” and Don’ts”. They include:

- Always RSVP in a timely fashion to any invite you receive. Remember, to reply even if it is a “no”. As a host, it is incredibly hard to plan an event if you are not sure how many people to expect.
- Read the invite for specifics (i.e. dress code, childcare/involvement, contributions, directions, host gifts, etc.) It can be embarrassing to arrive underdressed, overdressed or with children for an adult-only event. Many times, in lieu of a hostess gift, a donation/gift card is requested instead. It is important to read the invitation in its entirety.
- Be aware of the event’s schedule. Arrive and leave on time and in accordance with the invite. Do not be the early one, nor the last to leave.

There may be times when a Spouses’ Club will receive an invitation to an event at a REPFAC (ex – District or Area Commander’s home) or other Flag Quarters where the Admiral has the staff and a setting to host events at their home. The Spouses’ Club may be invited as guest, or simply allowed to use the home to host an event. One of the more well-known social events of the year is the Welcome Tea in which the District or Area Commander and their spouse will graciously open their home to the local Spouses’ Club to welcome the “start” of a new year for the spouses.

In instances where the Spouses Club *is the host* of an event at an Admirals home we have established guidelines for the Clubs so they may be represented in the most positive light. Keep in mind that while the purpose of a REPFAC or other Flag Quarters is to conduct public relations and social entertaining responsibilities that represent the interests of the United States Coast Guard, it is still the home of the individual family. In addition to the items above, they include:

- Identify a spouse who will be the liaison between the club and the REPFAC. Often times the spouse will be dealing directly with the Admiral’s spouse or SCA (Special Command Aide).
- Clear, effective communication is key. Coordinate matters such as date, time, dress code, food, food prep, cleanup, final RSVP numbers, changes, etc.
- The club will be responsible for providing the food, setup, cleanup, etc., unless otherwise offered by the Admiral or their spouse.

### **Thank You Notes**

Whether you attended as a guest of the Admiral, you attended the REPFAC or Flag Quarters as the “host” or it was an event in the community, send a timely “Thank You” note to the host. While it may seem old fashioned, a hand written thank-you is still one of the sincerest forms of appreciation. In instances where an individual or community organization supported, honored Coast Guard members, their spouses, or your club, a thank-you note confirms to them that their support of the local Coast Guard community is support well placed. Simple gestures like a timely “thank you” often times leads to inclusion in future events.

### **Children’s Activities**

Having parties and social events can be a great way to bring military children together for friendship and a sense of belonging.

- Children’s Sunday Sundae Parties - Have each family bring their favorite toppings. Let the club furnish the ice cream, if funds allow. Creativity soars, as there is “something about ice cream...”
- Picnic in the Park - Have parent/child potato sack and three-legged races. Each family brings a salad to share, something to grill and drinks for themselves
- Meet at the Beach - Having many adults makes watching the children at the beach a little easier
- Meet at the Pool - Use on-base pools. Bring the kids or have a Parents’ Day out
- Craft Day - Make a simple craft with the children. One idea is laminated place mats, for holiday or everyday use. There are probably talented people in your group, and there are many craft books available in the library
- Costume Party - Do not reserve this idea just for Halloween
- Wands and Crowns - Children can make wands out of cardboard boxes, aluminum foil, straws and ribbons. Make crowns out of construction paper
- Children’s American Flag - Create a large paper or cloth American flag where each red stripe is made of red handprints from children (add their name at the bottom of their handprint) and in the middle of each white star tape a small headshot of each child
- Life-Size Hug - Trace the outline of the child from the waist up, have the child color it in, and mail it to the deployed parent. When the parent feels lonely, they can pull of the hug from their child

### **Holiday Parties for Children**

Holidays are a great time for families, but especially exciting for children. There are many books on planning children’s parties available in stores, at the library or on the Internet. When you plan the parties, remember that a little activity goes a long way. Children are often overwhelmed with too much stimulation and are often content simply being with other children. Some ideas may include:

- Spring Fling
  - Divide the children into groups and rotate them through the games. This creates a more organized atmosphere.

- A piece of felt (relating to the holiday theme) stapled to a sheet of plywood makes a great target for Ping-Pong balls with Velcro glued onto them. The eyes, nose and mouth are prize-winning target areas
- Sponsor an egg hunt with treats inside plastic eggs
- Offer face painting
- Have a picnic or barbecue
- Cordon off a corner for story time
- Have a bunny-hop race
- Have a craft table for children to color, stamp, paint, make hats or stickers
- Fall Harvest - Celebrate the fall season with these events and activities:
  - Hay rides from local veterans' groups or other community volunteers
  - Have a costume party
  - Do your own beanbag toss
  - Goodie bags stuffed with \$1 items
  - Trick or treat at the mall
- December Holiday Party: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa - This is by far the most involved, yet most appreciated, of all parties. Be sure to start early in the year – September is not too early. First on the agenda is finding a location, because they go fast. Reserve your location and Santa suit rentals as far in advance as possible. Check with local toy wholesalers for novelty prizes. Order early and in sufficient quantities. It is better to overestimate and save leftovers for the future than to run short. Some ideas for holiday parties are:
  - Holiday Gifts - Have parents bring a wrapped gift for each of their children. Be sure each gift is labeled with a name or sex and age. Set a dollar limit (\$20, for example) for individual gifts.
  - Tickets to a Show - Take the children to see the local ballet's production of "The Nutcracker" or other holiday programs. Group discounts may be available.
  - Make Holiday Ornaments - Use the recipe for no-bake dough on the previous page. Use cookie cutters in festive shapes

## **When the military members are deployed**

### **Halfway Celebrations**

The halfway celebration is a recognition of having made it through the first half of a deployment, and it is a time to re-energize the skills developed in the first half of deployment to get through the second half. Start planning for the halfway celebration and for homecoming early in the deployment.

If the group wishes to have a theme for the deployment, determine what it will be at your first or second meeting. A group may meet formally only a few times before the end of the deployment. Some successful themes include: "Follow the Yellow Brick Road," "Right Here Waiting for You," "back in the U.S.A." or anything that might represent the group, such as the time of year, a popular song or a movie. Maintain the theme throughout all the deployment projects.

Planning a successful halfway celebration is much like planning any party. Form a committee to do the research and legwork for the group.

- **What** - Observe the halfway celebration in any way the group sees appropriate. Potluck dinners, dinners out or having parties at base clubs, hotel ballrooms and restaurants are popular choices.
- **Where** - Good places to suggest are local hotels or clubs (for catered affairs), dinner theaters or restaurants (for simple “meals only” affairs). Consider on-base facilities that may charge a nominal fee.
- **When** - There is no exact halfway point, so choose a date somewhere in the range and go with it.
- **Who** - Again, it is up to your group. Some include mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers. Most include only the spouse or significant other of the deployed service members.
- **Cost** - Finding places to have your celebration can be challenging and fun. You will want a location that appeals to the majority of the group. Offer a variety of activities or places to go. Some places may be out of reach financially for some members of your group, so sensitivity to this fact is important. One option would be to subsidize the cost through fundraising activities, so all can participate. Contact another command spouses' Club to see what they did for an event.
- **Advertise** - Get the word out early to everyone invited, so they have time to save (especially for large affairs). Make sure everyone knows the details as far in advance as possible.
- **Reservations** - Be sure to allow plenty of time between the RSVP and the date of the affair. At least two weeks is necessary. To cut down on no-shows, charge a small registration fee that can be refunded at the door or used to cover a portion of the cost of the evening.

### **Night-Before Party**

Many Spouses' Clubs choose to have a reception the night before homecoming. The reception is for all spouses' club members and out-of-town guests. It allows crew families to meet each other the night before and share the excitement of the command's return from sea. It is also a good time to talk to everyone-especially extended family members – about safety on the pier and ship or to release other important information to help them have a great homecoming day.

### **Homecoming**

The best homecoming day is a planned one. Planning for homecoming is a big job and should begin soon after the command deploys. Spouses' clubs spend much of their money, time and effort for the special day. A homecoming committee should be established at the first or second meeting. This will allow enough time for the group to decide on activities, banners, music, etc. The most important sight for service members is their families standing on their pier to welcome them home.

### **Welcome Home Banner**

Family members can decorate banners on sheets, canvas, poster board, or butcher paper with paints and markers. Use your imagination! Check with the host command for details on placement.

- Ask local awning and tent companies or boat yards for donations of canvas. Latex enamel paints are best because the colors are varied, and they do not run like oil-based paints. The cost is minimal, and cleanup is easier.
- Before picking up a paintbrush, design the banner entirely on graph paper. To ease transfer of design, graph the entire face of the canvas in 1– or 2– inch squares and copy design from the paper.
- When satisfied with the design, find a large area to paint in, such as a basement, empty parking lot or driveway. If inside, ensure the space is well ventilated. If outside, be sure to anchor the corners and edges of the canvas to avoid wind damage. Start painting in the center of the sign and work out to the edges so there is plenty of workspace for everyone.
- After a suitable drying time (usually two days in sunny, 70-degree weather), attach grommets at 19-inch intervals on all four sides. Do not attempt to fold the sign until you are sure it is dry. Cut slits at regular intervals to allow wind to pass through while the banner is hanging.

### **Pillowcase Banner**

Start this project as soon as the command leaves for deployment. Each family cuts open a pillowcase and draws a cute saying or love note on it. Sew the pillowcases together and mail to the ship. Display on the mess decks or other prominent location. Crewmembers can cut their pillowcases off or invite family members on board to a duty-night dinner for the occasion.

### **Pennants**

Cut felt or cloth into long triangles. Hem the straight edges to allow quarter-inch dowels in the hems. If time or ability is taxed with hemming, simply hot glue the straight edge of the cloth to the dowel. Pennants can be personalized or standardized for distribution on the pier or in the hangar. Designs can be added with craft paints, letter cutouts or markers.

### **Picket Signs**

Staple sheets of poster board to 1– by 2-inch wooden slats for handles. This is a good activity for groups. Either decorate alike or personalize.

### **Leis**

There are many different ways to make bow leis. The simplest and least expensive leis are made from plastic bags. Red, white and blue can be ordered locally from businesses advertising in the Yellow Pages under plastic, sheeting or business supplies. The host command can help you decide on the length you need, and the plastics distributor can help you order the quantity of bags you need.

- Cut the bags into strips 18 inches wide by 36 inches long. Fold the strips in half to make an 18-inch square and tie the strip around a half-inch clothesline cut to a length of approximately 100 feet. The lei will look lifeless and limp at first, but it can be puffed up by gently separating the layers of plastic.
- Leis are fun to construct. Have a picnic or potluck and make a day of it. Unlike painting projects, children enjoy making the lei, since it is difficult for them to make a mistake.
- Set up a time with the host command to get the lei to your command via a tugboat. Identify volunteers to get the lei from storage to the host command.

#### **Other options and Tips for Making Your Lei:**

- Use white trash bags and spray paint colors of your choosing
- Instead of trash bags, use plastic tablecloths. Rolls of long plastic tablecloths can be ordered from a party store in a wide variety of colors. The plastic can be cut into strips and tied to your clothesline.
- Use a rope instead of clothesline
- Borrow or rent a lei from a sister ship
- If you plan on mailing to the ship instead of working with host command, mail at least 30 days before the return date.
- Depending on your ship, leis may be 75 to 175 feet long
- Be sure to leave ample space at each end of the lei for it to be properly hung

## **Emergency Preparedness**

Most Coast Guard families live far from their extended family, and when a crisis occurs, the distance can compound the feeling of being overwhelmed and alone. A Spouses' Club may:

- Work with the command ombudsman to initiate the phone tree
- Coordinate meal delivery to affected families
- Arrange information and support group meetings
- Coordinate transportation
- Locate accommodations for out-of-town guests
- Arrange emergency child care
- Be available to families at the hospital
- Attend memorial services

A note on Spouses' Club response to tragedy: Crisis situations can bring out a strong desire to lend assistance. However, for the people who are in crisis or suffering from a tragic event, well intended support from many people can actually be intimidating and

overwhelming. Spouses' clubs should whenever possible coordinate their effort and select an individual to act as the liaison or focal point for response. Of course, every response will need to be dealt with individually and the circumstances will guide you in your response.

## Spouses' Club Checklist

- Has written by-laws that include:
  - Group's name
  - Group's purpose
  - Leadership structure
  - Membership requirements
- By-laws have been submitted to the current commanding officer for permission to use the command name
  - Has an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and a Spouses' club bank account
  - Knows and understands the rules of operational security (OPSEC)
  - Has a social roster of interested members
  - Has at a minimum a president and treasurer, and an official command liaison
  - Periodically surveys membership to assure needs are being met
  - Uses appropriate communication tools to reach out to command families
  - Invites newcomers to meetings
  - Creates an agenda for each meeting
  - Creates a warm, friendly meeting environment
  - Documents decisions made at meetings
  - Works effectively with command ombudsman
  - Delegates responsibilities to members
  - Has a budget or spending plan
  - Responsibly manages funds and audits as needed
- Requests Installation Commanding Officer approval for any on-base fundraising events when the location is other than unit command spaces
  - Effectively plans events/activities
  - Appropriately recognizes group members
  - Has a plan to support members and other command families experiencing crisis



## First Meeting Checklist

### *At least one month prior:*

- Meet with your commanding officer (CO):
  - Learn how the CO believes the spouses' club can best support the command and families
  - Ask who will serve as the club's command liaison
  - Invite the CO to attend the first meeting
  - Ask if future check-ins can be informed of the club and consent to release of personal contact information for spouses' club phone and e-mail trees
- Talk with the command liaison, ombudsman and potential spouses' club leadership to begin planning the establishment of a group or to re-energize a group
- Select a day, time and place to meet
- Prepare a meeting agenda:
  - Welcome
  - Ask someone to take notes of decisions made (if secretary has yet to be appointed)
  - Introductions
  - CO remarks
  - Discuss group goals
  - Select leadership (may be temporary)
  - Select one or more individuals to draft/review by-laws
  - Ask treasurer to set up a bank account, if none exists
  - Arrange time/location of next meeting
  - Wrap up
- Request to publicize meetings; use plan of the day/week/month, posters at the command, phone calls, command or ombudsman newsletter and direct mail.
- Provide directions to the meeting and, if available, advertise childcare and the cost of such care, if any.

### *Few Days Prior to Meeting:*

- Confirm meeting location
- Confirm childcare
- Ask attendees to bring light refreshments
- Call, text message, or e-mail reminders to potential members, command leadership, their spouses, ombudsmen, etc.
- Make copies of the agenda
- Make directional/welcome signs to post at the meeting sight

### *One Hour Prior to Meeting:*

- Post directional/welcome signs

- Arrange chairs so participants can see one another
- Place agendas on chairs or tables
- Set out refreshments
- Ensure there is a trash receptacle
- Note locations of restrooms and child care

***Thirty Minutes Prior:***

- Take a deep breath and smile
- Welcome participants as they arrive
- Chat with participants and introduce them to one another
- Offer refreshments

**Meeting Start Time:**

- Ask everyone to sit
- Welcome participants
- Follow prepared agenda

**Within a Week after the Meeting:**

- Draft meeting minutes
- Establish spouses' club social roster, with contact information
- Distribute minutes to all participants who provided an e-mail address
- Call anyone who did not provide an e-mail address
- Begin planning for the next meeting

## Sample Agenda and Minutes

### Sample Agenda:

- Call the meeting to order
- Introduce new members/participants to the group.
- Introduce guests or guest speaker.
- Ask for the secretary's minutes and ask for corrections or additions. If there are none, say, "Minutes approved as read."
- Ask for the treasurer's report.
- Ask for committee reports.
- Review unfinished business.
- Ask for new business.
- Ask for announcements.
- Adjourn the meeting and socialize

### Sample Minutes:

- Name of the organization.
- Date, hour and location of the meeting.
- Attendance and who presided over the meeting.
- Guest speaker and topic.
- State each main motion and the name of the person making it.
- State whether the motion was passed or not passed and record the vote on the question.
- State whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read or corrected.
- List committee reports and who read them.
- Record old and new business agenda items discussed.

### Fundraising Checklist

- \_ If on-base, within command spaces, does the CO approve of this fundraiser?
- \_ How much money can the group realistically expect to earn?
- \_ Is the group likely to earn enough money to be worth the effort involved?
- \_ Are group members eager to support this fundraiser?
  - Have you asked?
  - How have you created buy-in?
  - How have you created excitement?
- \_ How much initial outlay of funds is required to implement the fundraiser?

\_ What is the “What’s in it for me?” for the potential customer? (If that can’t be stated clearly, is the idea worth pursuing? Additionally, if it is not clear, it will be difficult to market.)

\_ Will this be easy to market? (If no one knows about it, you won’t make any money.)

\_ If selling a product, is there a minimum number of an item the group must commit to selling?

\_ Who will most likely use/buy our product (target market)?

\_ Will anything conflict with the fundraiser being successful? (For example, a bake sale during inspection, rain on the day of a car wash, other groups doing the same fundraiser at nearby location).