

U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps To Mark 50th Anniversary

By PETER ATKINSON, Deputy Editor

The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC) will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its official chartering by Congress with ceremonies in Washington and San Diego in late September and early October.

While details still are being finalized, the Washington event will be held Sept. 29 at the U.S. Navy Memorial. It will showcase a number of Sea Cadet units and color guards, and feature guest speakers and the pinning of a 50th anniversary pennant on the unit colors, according to NSCC Executive Director James E. Monahan. There also will be a cake-cutting reception and other recognition.

A week later, on Oct. 6, another ceremony will be held onboard the museum carrier *Midway* in San Diego, again highlighted by cadets in formation, guest speakers and other special events.

"We're going to do the best we can to showcase the program in an East Coast/West Coast type of venue," Monahan said.

The Sea Cadet program has every reason to celebrate. Since receiving its charter as a nonprofit youth development organization with an emphasis toward the sea services on Sept. 10, 1962 — four years after being founded by the Navy League in an effort led by Morgan L. Fitch, at the request of the Department of the Navy — the NSCC has been one of the nation's premier programs for young people.

"We're approaching 12,000 members [cadets and adult volunteers], which is a high-water mark," said Randy W. Hollstein, NSCC chairman. "The training curriculum is varied and diverse and as interesting as it's ever been. It's a great program and we've been working very hard to make it better."

Under the direction of a small staff at Navy League headquarters in Arlington, Va., and the assistance of countless adult volunteers around the country, the NSCC has seen more than 150,000 cadets, ages 13-17, move through its ranks. Thousands more 11- to 13-



U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps cadets practice live firefighting under the supervision of Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Carlos H. Carlos at the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit Whidbey Island, Wash., firefighting training facility July 26. The school provides classroom instruction in personnel protective equipment, flight and hangar deck equipment and systems, procedures and techniques for combating fires, and hands-on training through actual firefighting exercises.

year-old cadets have participated in the Navy League Cadet Corps (NLCC), which is not included under the NSCC charter but is sponsored by the Navy League and operated by the NSCC.

Many have continued on in the sea services. Among the more recent former cadets to do so is Navy Ensign Katie Castro, who served with the NSCC's F.D. Roosevelt Squadron at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., from 2003-2008.

In a recent profile by Fleet Readiness Center Southeast public affairs, Castro credited her involvement with the Sea Cadets — and her mentor in the program, Lt. Cmdr. June Tillett, NSCC — for helping her to realize her dream of pursuing a career in the U.S. Navy.

"When I was a Sea Cadet, I remember thinking, 'I want to be like her when I grow up,'" Castro said. "Cmdr. Tillett was one of my most important mentors with an incorruptible moral compass."

Castro was one of 1,077 midshipmen to receive a diploma during the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 2012 graduation and commissioning ceremony in Annapolis, Md., May 29, and now is preparing to serve aboard sub-

marines. She reported to the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command in Charleston, S.C., in July for a year of training, followed by 10 weeks of study at the Submarine Officer Basic Course in Connecticut.

Former Sea Cadets make up 11.5 percent of this year's incoming Plebe class at the Naval Academy.

Cmdr. Holly R. Harrison, former cadet chief petty officer of the Maryland Corsairs Division, chose the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, graduating in 1995. In May, she took command of the 270-foot Medium Endurance Cutter *Northland*, her second command afloat assignment. In 2003, Harrison became the first woman from the U.S. Coast Guard to earn a Bronze Star, which was awarded for service during Operation Iraqi Freedom as commander of the cutter *Aquidneck*.

Another former cadet with the Dahlgren Division, Va., Navy Capt. Michael C. Sparks, chief, Combatant Modernization Branch, Surface Warfare Division, received his commission through the Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C., in 1988. He has since commanded the mine countermeasures ship *USS Dextrous* and the guided-missile destroyer *USS Momsen*.

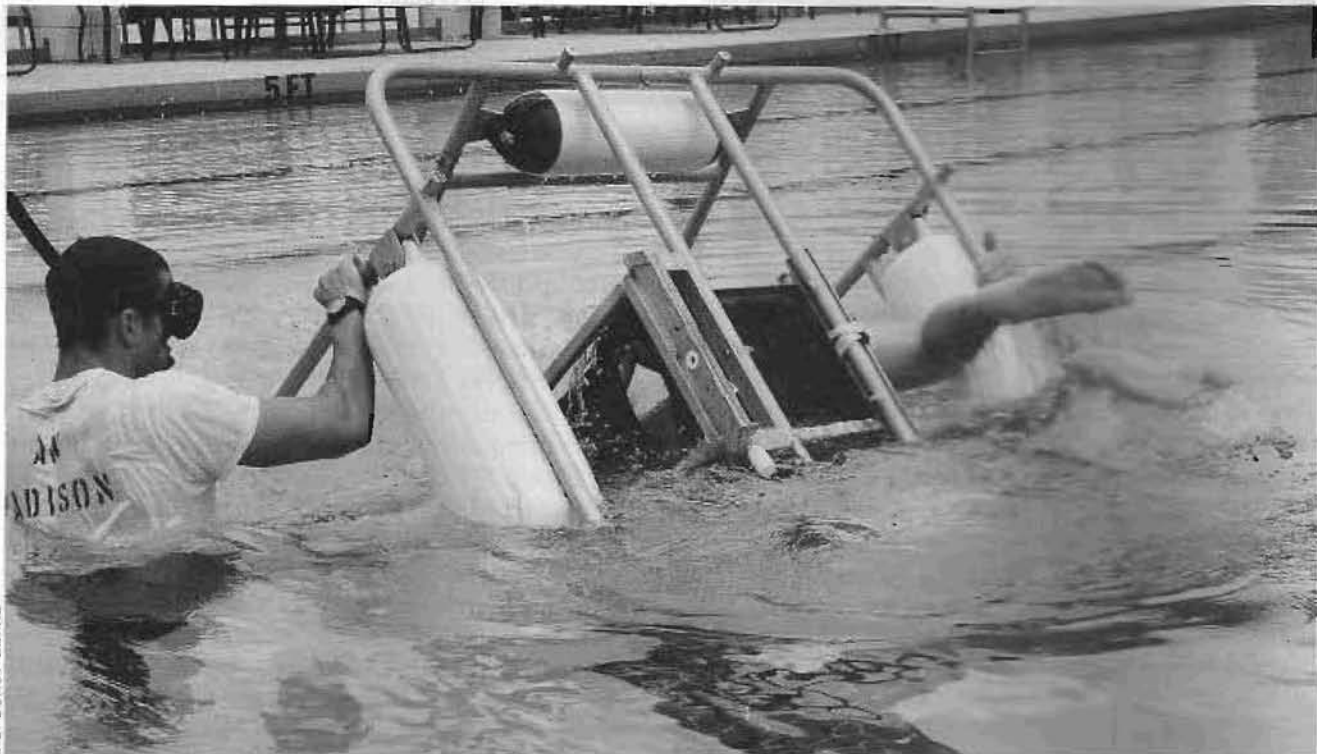
As of April 30, there are 408 NSCC/NLCC units in 48 states — only South Dakota and Vermont do not

have one — Puerto Rico and Guam. And with membership on the upswing — enrollment has grown by 6.2 percent in the past two years to nearly 9,000 cadets, according to NSCC statistics — there could be more success stories like these in the years to come.

"One of the things we're proud of is, as a result of all the opportunities and the variety that is out there, we know we're growing. A lot of these similar type youth programs are suffering from declining enrollment, whereas we're actually growing," said Henry J. Nyland, NSCC deputy director.

Over the past decade, the NSCC has dramatically increased the number and types of training opportunities that are available to cadets. Training formerly was offered only during the summer — or left to the direction of individual units — and focused primarily on such traditional disciplines as leadership, air and ship-board training, seamanship, medical and recruit training, and master at arms. Sea Cadets now can train during winter break, take part in the International Sea Cadet Association's exchange program or gain experience in culinary arts, scuba diving, photo journalism and explosive ordnance disposal, among others.

Opportunities now are available in more than 40 career fields, according to Stephen K. Bunting, who heads



U.S. COAST GUARD

Airman James Madison and Petty Officer 3rd Class Richard Nestler, whose hand can be seen at right, dunk U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC) Petty Officer 2nd Class Reiley Nolan during shallow water egress training at Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater, Fla., July 25. NSCC cadets and members of the Pinellas Park High School Coast Guard Club got an introduction to naval and civil aviation training during the Air Station's second annual Coast Guard Naval Aviation Internship. Nolan is a cadet with the NSCC's Suncoast Squadron in Clearwater.

np NSCC training. More than 8,000 training opportunities for cadets and adult volunteers were advertised in 2011 — about twice as many as a decade ago, he said.

More than 3,000 Sea Cadets and Navy League Cadets took part in recruit and orientation training in 2011, and another 2,860 received advanced training, an overall increase of 6.3 percent. More than 800 adult officers also participated in summer/winter training, according to NSCC statistics.

The newest NSCC training initiatives have focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] education. The SeaPerch remotely operated underwater vehicle program, which is sponsored by the Office of Naval Research and managed by the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International Foundation, was introduced in December and has really taken off.

Nearly 2,000 cadets already have taken part in the training, which includes the construction, operation and maintenance of the SeaPerch vehicles. For some units, it also has involved taking part in competitions and public demonstrations.

“What we want to do is take that to the next level,” Nyland said. “How do you redesign your Perch to do specific things or to compete well in specific competitions? The SeaPerch program itself has been expanding as time has progressed and it’s significantly bigger and better than it was even a year ago.”

In June, the NSCC also signed on to participate in CyberPatriot, a high school cyber defense competition established by the Air Force Association in 2008. NSCC cadets will participate in an “All Services” division that includes Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps Junior ROTC and Civil Air Patrol units. Competition begins in the fall.

“We have a small number of units already participating, three to five, but we’ve been advertising it for the last month or so, so the word is getting out there,” Monahan said. “The things we’re doing with STEM are not in place of anything we have traditionally been doing, we’re just adding these things on to provide more opportunities and different kinds of training.

“To a large extent, this program has grown to its current state from word of mouth,” he added. “A kid goes off and does scuba training or SEAL training and comes back and talks to all of his friends; all of a sudden we have a lot of interest or referrals. Or we have cadets at an air show handing out brochures or just being present, being there in uniform, and people wonder, ‘Well, what is this all about?’”

A key to the expanded training and education opportunities of the last decade has been federal funding the NSCC has been receiving since 2000. Congress typically allots \$1.7 million annually for the NSCC in



At left, Lt. Cmdr. June Tillett, the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps regional director for Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, and Navy Ensign Katie Castro view the dorsal section of an F/A-18 Hornet as Aircraft Worker Jeremy Mosley prepares to install the dorsal fins and Avionics Technician Scott Sorrento explains the procedure during a tour of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast June 29. A recent Naval Academy graduate, Castro was a Sea Cadet in Jacksonville, Fla., from 2003-2008 and was mentored by Tillett.

the Navy Recruiting Command budget, and provides additional money from a separate request — to support NSCC training and keep the cost to the cadets and their families to a minimum.

“The money has made a big difference,” Nyland said. “We’re able to keep the cadet costs low, about \$120 a week [for summer training, in addition to standard uniform and enrollment fees]. But that’s nothing compared to what you’d spend on summer camp or other similar programs. So we feel pretty good about that.”

In order to ensure continued support for the funding and the NSCC program on Capitol Hill, Legislative Liaison Robert C. Hurd makes more than 700 office visits to members of Congress and their staffs a year.

For fiscal 2013, NSCC officials have again requested \$1.7 million from the Recruiting Command budget and about \$1 million in additional grant funding. They are hoping for the best when Congress returns in September to take up a continuing resolution to fund the government through March and address the looming threat of sequestration-mandated budget cuts.

“We depend heavily on our adult volunteers, so if we can support them with the funding, they’ll come up with the ideas,” Nyland said. “And as long as the ideas match the goals and objectives of the program, we pretty much say ‘yes.’ That’s how we’ve expanded into the culinary arts and have moved into other areas where there is a whole lot of interest.”

“We’ve had outstanding support from the Navy, the Coast Guard and Congress,” Hollstein said. “I want to get to 100 years, and if we can continue to get the funding support we’ve had on the Hill, we should be able to.” ■