

On guard

Group help turn the tide with Coast Guard Auxiliary

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For Linda Cummings volunteering with the Coast Guard Auxiliary was a natural fit, even if it meant turning her focus from the air to the sea.

"Everything I knew about navigation and safety is set in the air," explains the former Air Cadet.

But as a young Air Cadet, Cummings learned much about camaraderie and community service.

"It's an inherent thing that I like serving my community, I like doing it locally, and there's something special about people who mutually agree to wear a uniform and represent something bigger than themselves," she says.

The Ladner resident started going to coast guard meetings last August, joining the handful of women on the 20-plus member crew based out of the Point Roberts Marina such as Theresa Coe.

Coe would like to see more women involved in both Unit 8 and boating in general. Of the hundreds of boats about three owners are female, Coe says.

"As a family boating, both people (husband and wife) should know how to manipulate the boat, enough to get the boat home if something happens (to the other person)," says Coe.

As a former dive master in Florida and an avid sailor (now a training simulation specialist with NAV Canada), she has seen her share of accidents on the water.

When she moved here from Vancouver about a year ago, Coe brought her sailboat to the Point Roberts Marina and decided to learn more about the auxiliary.

"I just wanted to meet more people and give back to the community. So I thought what better way than through a sport I enjoy . . . and giving back to the community I live and play in."

She adds, "To me what I enjoy is knowing the services I'm giving at some point in time are really going to help somebody."

The crew takes part in plenty of training for a volunteer position which requires a high level of commitment.

"We do man overboard drills until we can do it in our sleep," says Kelly Scullion, who for a few years was the only active woman with the unit.

Like Cummings and Coe, she was taken by the sense of camaraderie and the opportunity to combine volunteerism with a passion for boating.

Cummings, who is pursuing a Masters in gerontology, says the coast guard is for anyone with the knowledge and the desire, "and even if you don't have the knowledge they'll transfer it to you."

As part of their commitment, everyone