

73. Coastal Sailing Training Program Background (2:53)

So I came - after being a Cutterman for my whole career about 30 years after I graduated - I returned to the academy as Superintendent and I found that Cadets were still learning to lead through seamanship. The experience that I always thought was the foundational leadership development experience at the Coast Guard Academy when I was Superintendent was the leadership 44 sail training program and we had also started up an Institute for leadership.

The Institute for leadership is the force behind the cadet leader development program and the Coast Guard Academy's mission is all about developing leaders of character and we do it through experience at Sea on a sailboat.

So the leadership 44 program as these 44 foot Coastal Sail training vessels they deploy with Cadets in the summertime on a two-week voyage around New England and cadets learn about themselves and about how to work as a team. They learn leadership right there on the water. They have to get to know each other and to work together.

I remember when I first came back as Superintendent, we had just launched these new leadership 44 sailboats that were provided by the Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association through donors. I asked the director of the waterfront one day I said to him Alan how's it going with the leadership 44 program with the cadets out there? He said oh it's okay ma'am it's going fine.

He just hesitated enough to where I knew I had to follow up so I said Alan tell me what's really going on. What's going on that you're not telling me? He says, "Well ma'am" he said "The cadets on Martha's Vineyard were getting ready to get the boat underway for the next day of the leg of their journey and the cadet responsible for the logistics filling up the fuel and the water tanks grabbed the hose and put it in the tank and filled it right up - but it was a water hose filling up a diesel tank.

So that boat wasn't going anywhere that day and I'm like I just laughed and I think that the director of the waterfront thought I'd be angry but - no - the reason there's so much power and cadets learning how to lead through sailing and seamanship is that you can make mistakes in a safe environment. We send the cadets out on these leadership 44 boats to learn to make mistakes to fail in small ways then they'll never do that again.

In fact, they're still telling that story 10 years later. No Cadet is ever going to fill the wrong tank up again.

So it's a great way to learn how to lead and when I retired in 2018, I came back immediately as chair of the Coast Guard Academy sailing Council to continue that thread from cadet to Cutterman to Admiral to Chair of the Sailing Council because I believe so strongly in the power of leader development and the Coast Guard Academy's mission to develop leaders of character and service to our great nation. Thank you

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Feedback

Military Core Values

Mission

Self-Awareness

Team-Building