**Commodore Daniel Maxim Award for Excellence in Education Award Nomination**

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**From:** FC Marcus Kiriakow, Flotilla 070-05-09 Stuart Florida

**To:** DCDR Louis R. Townsend

**Subject:** *Daniel Maxim Award Nomination for 2022*

**NOMINATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Name:** Gary R. Bowerman, Emplid #1235194

**Unit:** 070-05-09, Stuart Florida

**Region:** Atlantic East

**Commodore Daniel Maxim Award for Excellence in Education Award**

**Nomination Package 2022**

**Nominee Gary Bowerman FSO-PE FLOTILLA 070-05-09**

Gary Bowerman was born July 1945 in the western New York town of Lockport south of Lake Ontario. His parents worked in the Lockport area- his father a foreman at John Deere and his mother in the Lockport School System. In 1965 at the age of 20 he enlisted in the U.S. Army. During his 6 years in the Army he rose to the rank of E6 as an AMO specialist. After leaving the service he worked in Lockport at Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corporation. Gary became a Florida snowbird in 2006 to help aging family members with health issues. Later in 2012 he became a permanent Florida resident.

In 2010, Gary joined Auxiliary Flotilla 59 in Stuart, Florida because, in his own words, he wanted “*to learn about safety on the open water*.” His early auxiliary service focused on program visits and vessel inspections. In his second year he was appointed FS0-PV and ADSO-PV. He was elected to the Flotilla 59 bridge as VFC in 2014 and FC in 2016. This was followed by VDCR for one year and DCDR for one year. In 2019, he was appointed FSO-PE, a position he has nurtured to the present. He said he became an instructor because “*I saw a need for water safety after a close call with our grandson* (a near pool drowning). *I also wanted to learn more and help others*” Gary not only serves as the FSO-PE, he continues to be an instructor, VE and PV.

Gary’s awards speak volumes for his dedication and overall service to the Auxiliary and Coast Guard mission of recreational boating safety. Over the 13 years he has served the Stuart and Martin County boating community. He has successfully lived up to his desire to help keep the waterway safe for boating. He received 2 Commandant Letters of Commendation (2013 & 2019); 2 Auxiliary Membership Service Awards (2014 & 2019); 6 Auxiliary PE Service Awards (2016-2022); 13 Auxiliary VE/MDV Service Awards (2010-2022); 6 CG Meritorious Team Commendations (2013-2019); and 10 Sustained Auxiliary Service Awards (2011-2018). He also attained an Auxiliary Operations Program Ribbon (2011); an Auxiliary RBS Insignia (2011); 2 CG Unit Commendations (2014 & 2019); and a DHS Outstanding Unit Award (2022). His public education efforts during the Covid pandemic played an important role in Flotilla 59 being named Flotilla of the Year for 2020.

**Increase in Diversity of Courses offered by Flotilla and Additional Number of Classes Offered**

Gary Bowerman, FSO-PE Flotilla 59, Stuart Florida, understands the demographics of the Stuart/Martin County boating community and the need to educate that community in recreational safe boating. Florida is considered the “boating capital’ of the United States. Martin County has 18,376 vessels of the 987,000 vessels in all of Florida. The number of boat owners is increasing as retirees choose Florida as their choice of residence and young Floridians take to the waterways. With this in mind, Gary has made educating the boating community a keystone of his roles as a Flotilla 59 instructor, program visitor, and vessel examiner. He is fully cognizant of the number of Martin County accidents over the years (723) and being ranked 7th out of the top 10 Florida counties prone to boating accidents (2019).

The education approaches that Gary utilizes are varied and widely offered to reach as many layers of Martin County and the surrounding communities- Port St. Lucie, Palm Beach and Okeechobee. The primary class is the monthly *Boat America,* along with *GPS, Weekend Navigator, Suddenly in Command,* and Youth Course classes that in 2022 educated 176 enrollees over 290 hours at the Sandsprit Park Flotilla 59 building. Realizing the *Boat America* class is only the first step in a well-educated boating community, Gary initiated a monthly *GPS* and *Weekend Navigation* class. He also reaches out to the boating community through the *Suddenly in Command* class focusing on the everyday boater who might have to unexpectedly take command in an emergency situation. The course was aimed at individuals who have been on a boat as a passenger, but never had to actually “captain” the boat. This course is presented at marinas, yacht clubs, boat sale locations or boat retail stores such as West Marine.

Gary has incorporated the Austin Blue Foundation funds into the class offerings. This Foundation was established by the parents of Austin Blue- a young teen who perished as a result of a boating accident to expand the education of young adults in boating safety. This initiative helps young boaters meet the Florida law mandating that those born after January 1, 1988 need to pass a safe boating class in order to operate a vessel on Florida waterways. Gary also created a “readers digest” version of *Suddenly in Command*, a power-point briefing to be presented at marine retail sites to encourage boaters to take the next step-*Boat America*, *GPS* and *Weekend Navigators*. He went one step further by developing “Kids & Safety”, a pilot program for youngsters and their parents to build their water safety knowledge. He has also encouraged new flotilla members to complete the *Boat America* course as a requirement to become an active member of the flotilla.

In order to create awareness of the Auxiliary safe boating education mission, Gary personally posts all monthly classes on the Sandsprit outdoor display board with times and dates. He coordinates public education notices with the FSO-PV and FSO-PB. Public education notices are funneled through the Flotilla website and Auxiliary social media outlets. Gary also utilizes the Stuart Boat Show and community public affairs events to promote upcoming classes. Gary personally uses his program visits (35 program partners), vessel exams, and public affairs events to get the word out to the public.

**Improvement in Public Education and Member Training Instructor Effectiveness & Performance**

Gary’s success in the recreational safe boating classes is driven by his personal belief that instructors should not just read the power-point, rather they should give life to the material. He asks his instructors to go out of their way to add additional perspective to the information in order to stress its importance. Instructors are encouraged to interact with the students through question-and-answer intervals rather than mere recitation of facts. Gary is dedicated to having students understand the importance of water safety even if it means spending additional time with those who have difficulty understanding the material. It is a one-on-one teaching moment outside the group. Gary has often taken the extra time with younger students who have little background in the finer points of boating.

In order to have successful classes, Gary has taken the time to developed a cadre of 15 dependable, professional and knowledgeable instructors who believe, as he does, that having an educated boating community means a safer recreational boating community. Even though Gary has a solid instructor team he is always looking for new blood and fresh ideas. To “grow” the expertise of his team, Gary will have a potential or new instructor sit in a class to experience the presentation of material and the technique used. If they have not taken the class, he encourages them to do so. He also gets new instructors involved with the pre-class tasks. The tasks can be something as simple as putting out materials, taking attendance, or answering student questions. He will encourage the new instructors to work with a lead instructor in a classroom situation until they feel comfortable. With Gary’s encouragement, support and easy-going manner the instructors feel at ease and willing to take on the classroom tasks. They know Gary will support them with any issues or additional knowledge as his methods have been successful for many years.

The teaching day is a “well-greased machine“ due to the endless hours Gary puts into scheduling the instructors, the students, assembling the technology required and the materials necessary for the eight plus hours class. He is there at 7:00 for an 8:00 am start time to well past the 5:00 completion time. It is a long day every month for 11 months. He places instructors in successful situation and students in the classes where success is possible. Gary Bowerman is the reason for the great success Flotilla 59 has had in educating Martin County boaters.

**Improved Mentorship of Newer or Lesser Experienced Instructors**

Gary Bowerman’s eight-year tenure as instructor and Flotilla 59 FSO-PE has exemplified his ability to develop a well-trained, dependable, knowledgeable and proud group of instructors. He has mentored and encouraged new and experienced instructors to follow the established standard Auxiliary guidelines in the classroom and at alternate sites. Each instructor, potential, new or experienced is constantly reminded they represent the Team Coast Guard and Auxiliary while they are teaching. They are mentored to conduct themselves in a professional manner and appearance.

The mentorship program Gary has implemented for potential and new instructors is a step-by-step process that institutes: 1) awareness of the mission objectives; 2) classroom observation; 3) co-teaching with experienced instructors; 4) conducting an observed class. At each phase Gary takes time to evaluate, critique and discuss how the steps progressed. The system helps the individual experience and understand the strategies, techniques and material. It also encourages experienced instructors to become mentors.

New instructors benefit from on-the-job experiences while taking full advantage of the knowledge and expertise of seasoned instructors. Gary is fully invested in the system that has proven successful in instructor recruitment, development and retention during his eight-year tenure. He is respected by his fellow instructors, Flotilla members and leadership for his knowledge, efforts and success on behalf of the Flotilla 59.

**Development of New & Innovated Teaching Methods and Teaching Aids**

While the majority of classes promote the standard Auxiliary power-point offerings for *Boat America, GPS, Weekend Navigator* and *Suddenly in Command* in a structured classroom setting, Gary has managed to develop a way to enhance the delivery by moving outside of the classroom. He is the master of finding a way to make it work.

Gary is renowned for his ability to think outside of the box. He remembers, as do most “older” Auxiliarist, the more in-depth BS&S information and builds on that education by adding materials such as local charting and knot tying to the beginning of classes. The Flotilla 59 building, located on the St. Lucie River. has windows that open out to the local waterways so students can see first-hand the lessons learned from Chapter 3. Operating Your Boat…Safely. Gary took the initiative to develop a working partnership with the Martin County Sheriff’s Marine Safety office, by having them provide a local safety perspective and adding their input to the Florida safety portion of the classes. During the Covid pandemic, Gary worked with the FSO-CS to adapt technology to successfully continue teaching the *Boat America* class online and in a hybrid manner. This effort was instrumental in helping Flotilla 59 receive the 2020 Flotilla of the Year Award. Gary also took advantage of a virtual electronic fire suppression simulator as part of *Boat America* Chapter 4 “The Legal Requirements of Boating”. This is a hands-on simulation where students try to put out a simulated fire using an electronic extinguisher. The students really enjoyed the experience. Whenever possible, additional visual aids are introduced to expand the delivery of the lessons.

Gary has expanded the classroom into the community. He moved the classroom to an Okeechobee marine store facility at the bidding of the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s department, in an effort to educate young boaters. Gary continues to work with local marinas, marine retailers, and community events to emphasize the importance of a well-educated boating community. He has expanded the *Suddenly in Command* to a no-cost version in order to encourage boaters to take the more advanced classes. He created the *Kids & Safety* as an introduction of water safety for a 5 through 11 age group and their parents at local libraries and community centers. The last group had one hundred participants. Gary has taken the lead in having Auxiliarists and the Sheriff’s Department visit the Weather Bee Elementary School in Fort Pierce to act as “surrogate parents” for those parents who cannot attend due to their work hours. The individuals sit with the students who range in age from first grade to the sixth grade. The staff and parents have continuously expressed their gratitude to the Auxiliary and the Sheriff Department deputies for being there.

Gary continually dispenses boating safety information via his program visits and vessel safety checks. He uses static displays during National Safe Boating Week, the Stuart Boating Show and retail displays to get the message out. His efforts have been rewarded by multiple (10) Sustained Auxiliary Service Awards. The number of hours he has served speak to his efforts and devotion to the RBS initiative. Thanks to Gary’s efforts, the city of Stuart and the Martin County Board of Directors have continued to issue annual Proclamations expressing their appreciation of the service Flotilla 59 provides to Stuart and Martin County,

**Pride & Satisfaction That Comes Through Competing to be Recognized as being the Best of the Best.**

Each member of Flotilla 59 takes pride in being a part of Flotilla 59. They add to the long 80-year maritime history of service to Stuart and Martin County, recreational boating safety and community involvement. The successful accomplishments achieved by its membership whether it be Sustained Auxiliary Service Awards, National Award for publication (Crossroads Currents), work in the Martin County Emergency Operations Center, the community involvement asserts volumes of the effort and pride of each member. Flotilla 59’s instructors take pride in the role of promoting boating safety and environmental awareness. Gary epitomizes the desire to be the best, and to do everything to make boating safe in Florida. It is that sense of pride and dedication that helped Flotilla 59 become Flotilla of the Year. Gary Bowerman played a major role though his leadership during the Covid pandemic.

**Why Gary Bowerman?**

Gary Bowerman’s 12-year service to Flotilla 59 has been a remarkable tenure. He has through his leadership, dedication and perseverance achieved multiple awards for his efforts as a Vessel Examiner, Program Visitor, appointed and elected officer. As FSO-PE Gary has elevated the Flotilla’s Public Education programs to an enviable model on how to best serve the recreational boating community. He is recognized in Martin County, surrounding communities and among local agencies and business for his tireless educational outreach efforts. Gary’s leadership has cemented a professional, dedicated and knowledgeable instructor team who project those characteristics. He is an excellent communicator whether in course subject matter, class goals or class preparation. The environment Gary has established encourages new members joining the team and the existing members retention. He has successfully expanded the Flotilla’s Public Education program beyond the confines of the Flotilla’s classroom to multiple venues. His diversified and inclusionary thinking-outside-the-box has opened the doors to all members of Martin County. He has adapted to changing situations by developing solutions that overcome impediments such as the Covid pandemic. He believes there is always a solution, you just have to find it.

While all of the above are features of Gary’s leadership style, in Gary’s goal of what is educationally important one thing stands out- “*if there is only 1- student we have a class”.* It is not about making your numbers look good, it is to educate that student. He pays attention to all student needs and attempts to assist them through the class whenever possible. That special attention has brought many of his students’ success.

A special case occurred in one of his *Boat America* classes. Gary was aware of a young student’s difficulty in the adult classroom setting. This 13-year old girl was having issues understanding the test questions and was becoming frustrated. The girl confided to Gary that she was dyslexic and could only read at a second-grade level. He recognized that she had ample comprehension. In order to help her with the test he read the questions to her, along with the choices of answers. The test time took over an hour and a half. She understood the material and was, with no prodding, capable of choosing the correct response. She passed the test. It was a learning moment for Gary, the instructors present and that young lady.

**Endorsements**

What follows are the views Flotilla 59 instructors and leadership have cited as reasons why they believe Gary Bowerman deserves being considered for the Daniel Maxim Award for excellence in Public Education.

*Ten years ago, when I volunteered in the Auxiliary Gary was one of the first members to reach out to me. His dedication to the RBS program impressed me in many ways. His forward thinking to reach the public, shall I say, rocked the boat. Because of his leadership our mobile classroom has the capability to teach anywhere there is electricity and a chair for students. “If we have one student we teach” has been our mantra since Gary took office*

* **Marcus K. Kiriakow**, FC, MDV, AV-PQS, VE, instructor

*I think that Gary Bowerman is a more than worthy candidate for this award. He exemplifies the true core values of our organization. I have known Gary since I joined the USCG Auxiliary 12 years ago. Gary was one of the first members I met and his can-do attitude is infectious. He is a great gentleman and relates to his students at every age. He was forward thinking in understanding that safe boating affects everyone around the water. So, he took the classes to all kinds of locations. He never forgets the reason for Public Education.*

* **Henry W. Cushard**, DSO-PA, AUX-PAQ 1, instructor

*From Commander to Instructor,* *Gary has shown a passion for being an Auxiliarist. In his current role as FSO-PE Gary’s leadership has again proven to be second to none. He was instrumental in developing the online PE classes during the Covid pandemic. Our boating safety classes never missed a class. His leadership and drive to continually improve the instructor staff has made Flotilla 59 one of the most outstanding units in the Auxiliary.*

* **Mark A. Cleveland**, FSO-FN, MDV, VE, instructor

*I have witnessed Gary’s dedication, stamina, innovativeness and intense pursuit of educating the public. He goes above and beyond the requirements of every task he undertakes. He trains fellow instructors with kindness, great patience and enduring support. He seeks out opportunities to provide young people with knowledge and has developed relationships with local businesses, schools, libraries, and park districts to ensure the delivery of the CG Auxiliary messages.*

* **Raymond V. Preiksaitis,** FSO-PV, MDV, VE, instructor

*As a retired middle and high school teacher and long time Auxiliary instructor, I am thoroughly impressed with the manner and scope of what Gary provides Flotilla 59 Public Education classes. His efforts have elevated the program far beyond any I have experience in past Auxiliary programs. His continuing effort to find new outreach venues has expanded the classroom to the community. He is a forward-thinking individual who believes that there is no boundary to where the message of safe boating is taught. Set up a soapbox wherever you find an audience. I am proud to be a member of his instructor team.*

* **Gerard A. Perry**, FSO-DV, FSO-MS, MDV, VE, Instructor

*I am fortunate to have met and listened to USCG Auxiliary Commodore Dan Maxim in person. He was passionate about boating safety education and how we delivered that product. Commodore Maxim stressed we needed to teach boaters where ever they are, whenever they are, and don’t want them to come to you. Ever since Gary Bowerman became our Flotilla Staff Officer for Public Education that is what he has done. Pack it up and take it with you to whichever marina, boat store, or bait shop will have us.*

* **Diane L. Riggan**, AUX-PA3, AV, instructor

*Gary is well known and respected throughout the community for many different facets of Auxiliary work he does; from teaching, to developing partnership, to helping local organizations. Gary was instrumental in making virtual (and later hybrid) courses part of the curriculum. In no time, he had his instructors trained on how to teach students from a different platform. He didn’t miss a beat and continues to grow our classroom venue toward new domains. Gary espouses professionalism and ensures all members not only look the part, but walk the walk of Team Coast Guard.*

* **Dawn E. Muller** IPFC, MDV

*Gary Bowerman has been an inspiration for me throughout my five years in the Coast Guard Auxiliary. As a new instructor to boating safety, Gary understood my lack of boating knowledge and set about correct that delinquency. We discussed “team teaching” and agreed that sometimes two voices help the student stay alert and allow different ways of saying the same thing. He encouraged me to use a variety of techniques to engage students, especially when teaching federal and state regulations. With Gary’s encouragement, Flotilla 59 embraced the new environment of distance teaching. In 2020, when AUXDATA II was rolled out, we were among the first flotillas to implement virtual training sessions. I am continually in awe of Gary’s energy and drive to get the message of safe boating to the public. His advocacy is contagious. It is an honor to have had Gary as a mentor.*

* **Sheryl L. O’Neil**, VFC, FSO-IS, MDV, instructor



