

Educate Yourself!

Story and Photos by PAI Krystyna Hannum, District Seven Public Affairs

At some point in your military career, you will come across this person. For the enlisted, he is the gatekeeper to the road of advancement, for all Coasties, he is the bank teller for roughly 14 million dollars, and the source of information of how to get to where you want to go – educationally speaking. He (or she) is the unit educational service officer, and whether as a full-time or collateral duty, this is a person that can help you realize your dreams and then reach them.



Daniel Rogers became the full-time ESO in January 2006. Since he has been in the position, the amount of TA money that has been paid to Key West Coasties has increased by more than five-times.

In Key West, Fla., the job of ESO to more than 700 personnel belongs to Daniel Rogers, CWO4 (Ret.), who began in January 2006 when the post became a full-time position. Prior to that, the ESO was a collateral responsibility.

In the Distance Learning Center, Rogers daily serves as a mentor to enlisted, officer, Reservist and dependants, helping them figure out what rate or college to go to, how to get there, and what money is available to them along the way. He is also a test administrator for end-of-course tests, ASVAB, DANTES, CLEP, college exams and the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT).

Rogers's goal for the education program here is two-fold:

"I'd like to get more members and their dependants educated, and to get the students to spend more of the Coast Guard money available to them," said Rogers. "The Coast Guard is paying for it; why not use all the money you can."

"It's not just about a college education either – it's also about getting promoted. You don't get the benefits - more money, more responsibility and a better job - without the promotion."

One such beneficiary of the program is Petty Officer 3rd Class Roosevelt O. Broome, 25, a machinery technician on the cutter Pea Island. Having served for 5 years, Broome has worked with ESOs in the past, but at his previous unit the ESO was also the unit commanding officer and planning was difficult.

"We had to schedule our tests around the CO's schedule," said Broome. "[Here] it's great; a hundred times better, because the ESO is one man who focuses on us and our education, instead of a CO [or supervisor] who has an entire unit and other issues to take care of."

In addition to advancement, Broome is also interested in pursuing a college education and recently completed an online, self-paced computer course from Bellevue University. He paid nothing - all costs were covered by tuition assistance. Now Broome is considering a degree program in sport medicine, criminal justice, or business administration, but is finding some challenges.

"It's tough because there is only so much you can do online," said Broome, referring to the limited availability of classes offered in his program choices. "Also, being on a patrol boat with no underway connectivity makes it hard to take a regular-scheduled class."

Rogers is aware of that challenge and others.

“Getting the guys on the boats the college education they want is a challenge,” said Rogers. “Right now I’m talking with some colleges to fix this problem, perhaps by offering more self-paced courses. We don’t have a local four-year college here either. We’re very isolated, with only a community college and satellite school.”

“Getting people motivated to learn is also a challenge,” said Rogers. “They’ve got to figure out what they want to do, and then just do it.” The mentoring process assists in overcoming the motivational challenge. Rogers is always willing to help figure out what a person wants to do and show them how to search for more information.

Another tool a member can use is the American Council Education (ACE) review, which is an assessment of a member’s military experiences compiled into recommended college credits. However, even years of military training does not get you an easy degree.



Roosevelt Broome, a MK3 aboard the Pea Island, visits the Distance Learning Center to take an end-of-course test. During the first five months (152 days) of 2008, over 160 EOCTs were given there.

“Just because you are in the Coast Guard, you do not automatically qualify for a degree,” said Rogers. “It’s not that easy. You probably qualify for some things, especially the electives, but you still have to do some educational work for that college.” The education work could include the core classes – math, English, science and humanities.

“Before leaving active duty, at least get an associates degree to have your core classes done,” said Rogers who got his associates degree in 1983 while on active duty. Back then, TA only covered 75 percent of the bill, but Rogers has used that degree for his ESO job, as well as towards achieving a Bachelor of Science degree in American Studies, with a minor in education.

“The older you get, the more you appreciate learning,” said Rogers, who is a current full-time student through Columbia College online.

Another person who appreciates the value of an education is the commanding officer of Sector Key West, Capt. Scott Buschman. When he was a junior officer, Buschman said there were not opportunities for furthering your education like there are today.

“The program here is spectacular,” said Buschman. “The benefits of tuition assistance, Coast Guard Foundation grants, and a full-time ESO equal an unprecedented opportunity for off-duty education. With the technology and online availability today, it is a piece of cake for someone to get their associate degree.”

Others around Key West seem to agree. In 2007, \$165,000 of Coast Guard tuition assistance was paid out to 111 military students. From January to May 2008, over \$72,000 has been given to active duty Key West folks, split among 75 college students. All these numbers are drastically up since having a full-time ESO – less than \$30,000 of tuition assistance was used in 2005.

“I challenge everyone to surpass last year in credits and money spent,” said Buschman. “I also encourage everyone to frequently visit Mr. Rodgers. He is a wealth of information on all education opportunities.”

So go out there, utilize the ESO, and get a piece of that \$14 million dollar cake. The icing on top is the personal satisfaction and a financially lucrative piece of paper, beneficial to your days after the Coast Guard.

Please Note: Dependents are not eligible for TA. For other options, check out Education and Scholarships at www.uscg.mil/spouses/