



Press Release

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VERMONT NATIVE NAMED TOP COAST GUARD COXSWAIN

BOSTON - A Vermont man was named April 28 as the Coast Guard's Most Outstanding Coxswain in 2003 for his performance of duties while stationed at Coast Guard Station Chatham, Mass.

Petty Officer 1st Class Jason Cross, 26, of Wilmington was selected as the winner of the 2003 Cmdr. Ray Evans Outstanding Coxswain trophy for his exemplary performance and superior technical, professional, leadership and seamanship abilities as a Coast Guard coxswain.

A Coast Guard coxswain is a small boat operator and is responsible for the direction of the deck crew's actions.

Senior Chief Stephen Lutjen, Station Chatham's officer in charge, credits Cross' success to hard work, his extensive knowledge of the area and superior leadership skills.

"There's nothing that goes on here that he doesn't know how to handle," Lutjen said. "He leads by example. His crew follows him because he's there working with them. They try to keep up with him."

Cross reported to Station Chatham as a seaman apprentice fresh from Coast Guard basic training in 1997. He quickly attained certification as a crewman aboard four different small boats, and as a law enforcement boarding team member. Cross was promoted to petty officer 3rd class as a boatswain's mate in 1999, and he quickly qualified as a boarding officer and officer of the day for both Station Chatham and Station Provincetown.

Cross entered the Surfman training program in 2001 as a petty officer 2nd class and certified as a Surfman on the only remaining 44-foot motor lifeboat in the Coast Guard as well as on the Coast Guard's prototype 32-foot near shore lifeboat. Surfmen are the Coast Guard's most highly trained boat handlers and are part of a 200-year tradition of lifesavers. Operating boats in dangerous surf and heavy breaking seas - an apt description for the waters off Chatham - remains one of the most challenging and dangerous tasks faced by Coast Guard coxswains. Cross was promoted to 1st class petty officer May 1, 2004.

Cross said that he thought it was a joke when he found out he'd won the award. He didn't even know he'd been nominated.

"The crew and the station really deserve this award more than I do," Cross said. "The crew just makes the coxswain look good. They do all the work. I just drive the boat."

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