

Biking for a cause: The tour de Cape May is scheduled for May 31 at ferry terminal

By ALEXANDRA CANAL
Special to the Star and Wave

The Tour de Cape May, which began last year as a way to raise money in honor of a former Lower Cape May Regional educator, was so popular that it will be returning this year.

The Tour de Cape May bike ride is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, May 31, at the Cape May-Lewes Ferry parking lot.

The race is either 10 miles or 20 miles, depending on the preference of the rider, and is meant to serve as a fun, outdoor event to benefit the Cape Educational Fund.

The Cape Educational Fund, a local, community-based nonprofit organization was created in 1981 to promote quality education in Cape May County schools.

Jan Randle, a French teacher at Lower Cape May Regional High School and the recently appointed president of the Cape Educational Fund, started the event last year in honor of the late Gene Fole, a previous principal of the high school.

"Gene died of cancer. He was sort of local hero, a magnificent man. I started the race as a fellowship in his honor and created the Gene Fole Scholarship," Randle said. "A lot of people came out for him. I wasn't going to do it again this year, but it was just so fun and everyone kept asking."

This year's Tour de Cape May proceeds, in combination with donations from sponsors and various foundations, will go toward grants for innovative Cape May County teachers.

The Cape Educational Fund gives grants to Cape May County teachers of as much as \$500. Teachers had to submit

their applications by May 1.

"Previous winners have done creative things like making fishing rods with students, just extra things that cost time and money from teachers' own pockets," Randle said. "We give all the money away and try to give out 12 grants, so our goal is to raise between \$5,000 to \$6,000 to give away," she added.

Last year, 110 riders participated in the race. Randle said 30 riders already have signed up, "but it is hard to say an exact turnout for this year. A lot of people sign up last-minute. Regardless, it is a community event and a beautiful, fun ride."

Registration costs \$10 in advance or \$15 on the day of the ride. The fee includes a T-shirt and a drawstring bag or wristband. Registration forms and more information on the event can be found at www.tourdecapemay.com.



John Cooke/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

U.S. Coast Guard Master Chief Petty Officer Steven W. Cantrell, right, relieved Master Chief Petty Officer Michael P. Leavitt, left, during a ceremony Monday at Training Center Cape May. In the middle is Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Robert Papp.

Coast Guard change-of-watch ceremony held in Cape May

By JOHN COOKE
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — When Michael P. Leavitt joined the U.S. Coast Guard 32 years ago and completed boot camp in Cape May, he probably didn't envision his own change-of-watch ceremony on the same parade field from where he graduated. His original interest in the Coast Guard piqued when he saw a poster on a telephone pole in his hometown.

On May 22, Master Chief Petty Officer Steven W. Cantrell relieved Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Leavitt in a ceremony presided over by the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Adm. Robert Papp. The commandant was introduced with a volley of cannon fire to open the ceremony on the parade grounds of Training Center Cape May, the Coast Guard's only boot camp location.

In his remarks, Papp recalled interviewing Leavitt for the office. Leavitt called the admiral's office to reschedule the interview so he could be available for the birth of his grandchild. Papp commented "the master chief's priority of family first made a significant impact on the selection decision."

The change-of-watch ceremony is a time-honored event preserved by the rich heritage of naval tradition. It is a formal custom that is designed

to strengthen the respect of authority, which is vital to any military organization. The highlight of the ceremony is reached when both members read their orders, face one another, salute and transfer responsibility of command.

Immediately following the change of watch, Leavitt retired after 32 years of service. During his service, he received numerous personal awards, including the Meritorious Service Medal. He said he plans to return to his hometown of Fruitland, Idaho, and serve in his community as an athletic coach.

Cantrell enlisted in the Coast Guard in September 1983 and attended Recruit Training Center in Cape May. He becomes the 12th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard.

"To the men and women of the world's best Coast Guard, I am proud to wear the same uniform as all of you," Cantrell said. "I am honored to be afforded the opportunity to be your voice. To Master Chief Leavitt, I would like to say 'Thank you. Thank you, both Mike and Deb, for your years of service and sacrifice. I wish you and your family fair winds and calm seas in the next chapter of your lives.'"

Cantrell is reporting from his previous assignment as command master chief of Coast Guard Atlantic Area.

The responsibilities and

activities of the MCPOCG include: assisting in the development of policy for managing the enlisted work force of the Coast Guard; traveling to units to address service members on quality-of-life and personnel issues; formal testimonials before Congress; representing enlisted quality-of-life issues by speaking to various civilian and military committees and forums; and maintaining a strong relationship with service organizations and companies that support enlisted-personnel issues.

The office of the master chief petty officer of the Coast Guard was established by legislative action on Aug. 27, 1969, to provide the commandant of the Coast Guard with a personal adviser and assistant in matters affecting the enlisted members of the service, both active-duty and reserve, and their families. The MCPOCG is the most senior enlisted member of the Coast Guard.

The normal tour of assignment is four years, which runs concurrently with the commandant. The MCPOCG must be a living example of the Coast Guard's core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty. Individuals who are selected to serve in this prestigious position must possess the highest standards of professionalism and personal integrity.

Coast Guard Community

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an implied contract, which is recognized by the law.

He said even couples who live together for many years often want to make a public declaration of their love for one another.

"That's what I see us doing right now," Papp said.

He compared the process to become a Coast Guard Community to an engagement with the "nuptials upcoming." A committee made a recommendation to Papp, which he approved. Procedure requires 90-day public notice before it becomes official.

"There will be no problem," he said.

Papp was presented with proclamations from the county freeholders and state Assemblyman Sam Fioocchi (R-1st).

Mahaney presented Papp and his wife, Linda, with a painting of Cape May's Rotary Park bandstand by artist Patricia Rainey.

Papp will retire from the Coast Guard on May 30.

Chairman resigns

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"I don't see that happening," he said.

Johnson said he had mixed emotions on leaving the board.

"I believe I did the right things," he said. "Doing community service in this municipality is no easy task."

He said as a ratepayer he sees the importance of keeping the LTMUA as a separate authority, and questions the projected savings.

The people of the township hear shutting down the LTMUA will save \$1 million per year, but nobody asks the question exactly where are the savings coming from, Johnson said.

He said savings may come only from vacated positions such as the executive director's salary.

Johnson said the township would have to hire one to two employees to handle billing. The township could save a couple of hundred thousand dollars by reducing salaries, he theorized.

"This \$1 million pie-in-the-sky in a \$10 million operation, I hardly think so," he said.

Johnson said he believes the township was required by state statute to fill his seat within 60 to 90 days. He said the LTMUA was hoping to get a Department of Environmental Protection permit and a USDA grant to connect an additional 3,000 homes to municipal water service.

"Who knows now what will happen, if they will give it to us?" Johnson said.

He said he was "highly disappointed" with Mayor Michael Beck and his office for not reaching out to the board of commissioner to discuss ways to improve operations at the LTMUA.

"We did shared services, we did everything we thought a good neighbor does, but we didn't get that on the other

end," Johnson said.

Beck told the Star and Wave that his first responsibility was to the township. He said the dissolution would be good not only for LTMUA ratepayers but also for Lower Township taxpayers.

Beck said the \$1 million in savings resulting from dissolution of the LTMUA was projected in a professional audit.

"Even if it was a third of that, you're still talking \$300,000," he said. "I don't think we will know the full benefits until the day we dissolve it."

Beck said he did not believe anyone could dispute that a lot of money could be saved by dissolving the LTMUA. He said dissolving the authority was the smart thing to do from an administrative perspective.

"This is exactly what the taxpayers elected us to do, which is to get rid of the waste in government, and this is what this council must do," he said.

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