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Aurora Teen Sailors Appear Nationally, Need Funds Locally

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Seaman Apprentice Claus of Oswego, Petty Officer 2nd Class Koehnke of Palos Park, PO2 Mayer of Burlington and SA Wood of Aurora hold the colors high for the Chicago Bulls.

The nautically minded teens precision marching forth this season at the Chicago Bulls basketball games have appeared on the large screen of the Chicago Stadium as well as on small screens across the nation as the national anthem is shown on ESPN and superstation WGN Sports.

Color guard members hail from across Chicagoland and are members of the Aurora Division of the United States Naval Sea Cadets, a national youth organization that gives elementary through high school aged students a chance to sample life in the sea services and get valuable lessons and training along the way.

The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps is a program for young Americans, male and female, ages 11 through 17, whose objectives are to develop an interest and skill in and basic seamanship and in its naval adaptations, to train them in sea going skills, and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance and kindred virtues.

"We teach nautical values and train in a drug-free environment," says Aurora Division Commanding Officer Lieutenant Junior Grade Catherine "Cat" Cabe, who is a parent to one current sea cadet and one former cadet who is now a naval reserve midshipman in college.

The four member color guard that displays the flag at Bulls games and at many other functions in the western suburbs is composed of members from Kane, Will, DuPage and Cook counties. The association with the Bulls this

season has another major benefit for the cadets--an opportunity to fund their summer trainings at bases and aboard navy and coast guard ships across the country and around the world.

A key event will be the current ongoing sales of tax-deductible tickets for the March 6th Bulls game vs. the Dallas Mavericks.

"All proceeds from this sale will be donated directly to the Aurora Division," says Instructor Rob Claus, an adult volunteer with the program. "Our goal is to help provide summer trainings for the cadets who cannot afford to attend. A training can cost in excess of \$500.00 each," adds Claus.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Koehnke of Palos Park says the experience is like none other. "I tell people at school that you can learn and do whatever you want to apply yourself to," says Koehnke, whose school year training has been highlighted by summer training everywhere from baking with Navy chefs at Great Lakes Training Center to sailing the Atlantic Ocean with the marines and sailors of the USS IWO JIMA. "Ships, aircraft, you name it. You can see and do a lot."

As if his holding the American flag for all to see on national t.v. isn't enough.

For more information on contributing to or participating in Aurora Sea Cadets activities, including the crucial March Bulls fundraiser, visit their web site at www.auroraseacadets.org.

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