



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20593-0001
Staff Symbol: G-ICA
Phone: (202)366-4280
Fax: (202)366-7124

COMDTINST 5350.5
JUL 20 2001

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 5350.5

Subj: COAST GUARD PARTNERSHIP WITH FIRST BOOK

- Ref: (a) Coast Guard Mentoring Program, COMDTINST 5350.24B(Series)
 (b) Coast Guard Equal Opportunity Program Manual, COMDTINST 5350.4(Series)
 (c) Coast Guard Partnership In Education, COMDTINST 5350.22(Series)
 (d) Departmental Personnel Manual Letter No. 610-4

- PURPOSE. This Instruction establishes policy and guidance for carrying out the Coast Guard’s partnership with First Book – a national, private, non-profit, charitable organization whose mission is to put new books in the hands of economically disadvantaged children. This partnership complements the Coast Guard’s existing efforts in carrying out the National Partnership In Education Program and the Department of Transportation Garrett A. Morgan Technology and Transportation Futures Program as outlined in references (a), (b) and (c). It will also enhance our public affairs and outreach efforts to raise the visibility of the Coast Guard.
- ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Chief Counsel, and special staffs at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction.
- DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.
- POLICY. The Coast Guard will set up and implement this partnership under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as well as our general authority to conduct public affairs and outreach programs.

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	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1						
B		8	20	1	12	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	3		1	2	1		1	1	1
C	3	2	1	1	1	1			1		2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2		1		1	1			1
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5. OBJECTIVES. This partnership should:

- a. As with our existing Partnership In Education Program, increase the Coast Guard's potential to recruit in the diverse workforce that will enter the labor market in the 21st century.
- b. Expand education and literacy, especially among communities with large economically disadvantaged populations.
- c. Increase public awareness of our missions and people, as well as our value to the American public.
- d. Raise the visibility of the Coast Guard with Members of Congress and provide new avenues for interaction with federal, state and local public and elected officials.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. Commandant (G-I) is responsible for managing this partnership, and the Community Relations Branch (G-IPA) will be the primary point of contact for policy matters arising under the partnership.
- b. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands and commanding officers of headquarters units shall identify and seek opportunities to implement the partnership locally and at the unit level. In doing so, however, the voluntary nature of the partnership should be reinforced. The Memorandum of Agreement establishing the partnership with First Book is attached as enclosure (1).

7. GUIDANCE.

a. How First Book works.

- (1) First Book begins with the creation of a First Book Local Advisory Board (LAB). There are over 135 LABs currently in operation throughout the United States, most in areas where the Coast Guard operates. LABs consist of several local individuals (even as few as two or three) who are dedicated to organizing their community to distribute new books to literacy programs in their area. LABs initiate and manage all First Book activity in their city or area, and are comprised of a wide spectrum of volunteer leaders, including, but not limited to: librarians, teachers, retailers, lawyers, school representatives, and public officials. LAB members select community tutoring, mentoring and family literacy programs serving low-income and at-risk children and work to support those programs through book grants, special events in bookstores and national literacy initiatives.
- (2) First Book depends upon local involvement. Requests for Coast Guard support and opportunities will mainly come from these LABs. LABs operate in cooperation with the First

Book regional and national offices, which provide resources, primarily new books, and support for LAB activities. First Book has access to new books from several sources. First Book has negotiated deep discounts, including free shipping, with children's book publishers for the purchase of children's soft-cover books. These discounts allow for First Book to double its purchasing power in a unified effort to reach as many at-risk children as possible. Many publishers also donate a large number of new books to First Book. The First Book organization has no political or religious affiliation and will not accept or distribute books that are inconsistent with this status. The First Book national office works with its national partners, book publishers, and LABs to ensure that books donated for distribution are appropriate for children.

- (3) The new books are primarily distributed to needy children through “book parties.” These are events held at selected local locations where children from recipient groups come in to receive new books that they can keep for their own. Many times, these book parties include reading to the children and other activities that promote literacy.

b. Executing the partnership.

- (1) This partnership will be most effective if events and opportunities are coordinated and conducted primarily at the local level through a continuous relationship with a LAB. Coast Guard involvement with a LAB is the best means of ensuring that workload demands are balanced with LAB requests for Coast Guard assistance, that unit limitations are understood, that the partnership is executed consistent with this Instruction, and that the Coast Guard’s core values are preserved through the distribution of appropriate books. Units desiring to participate in an initial First Book event or to establish a liaison with a LAB should first contact the First Book national office at (202) 393-1222. Additional information about First Book can be found on their web site at www.firstbook.org. Units that have established a liaison with a LAB should continue to work directly with that LAB.
- (2) This partnership is structured so that all members of the Coast Guard family can participate and contribute – active duty, reserves, civilian employees, auxiliarists, retirees and family members. Units should look to all these members of the Coast Guard family as a force multiplier to support the partnership.
- (3) There is no specific template for the types of support units and our personnel may offer First Book. However, the most common support envisioned includes hosting book parties on board the unit, participating in other book parties locally, giving unit tours to First Book children, and providing temporary storage for new books and facilitating the distribution of those books to First Book children. Subject to certain restrictions, our support for First Book is limited only by our collective imagination.

- (4) Although support for the First Book partnership will require some commitment by Coast Guard units and personnel, the workload is not expected to be substantial. Therefore, units may be able to fold the partnership into their existing community outreach program. Units desiring to expand community outreach efforts or raise the visibility of the Coast Guard in the local community should consider First Book as a priority. Also, this partnership should not displace the Partnership In Education program, but rather be an extension of it. It is understood that support for First Book may impair the unit's ability to support other community or charitable efforts.
- (5) The Coast Guard's partnership with First Book provides an excellent opportunity to substantially raise the visibility of the Coast Guard. Units supporting the partnership should work with First Book to maximize media coverage of the partnership and joint CG/First Book events, including outreach to elected and other public officials from the local area.

c. Restrictions.

- (1) The Comptroller General has determined that civic, charitable, and similar community support activities involving limited use of agency resources and employee time fall within an agency's permissible range of discretion. *See* 71 Comp. Gen. 469 (1992). Therefore, appropriated funds and Coast Guard resources may be used to support this partnership, but only to the same extent as with the Partnership In Education Program (i.e., a limited and *de minimis* use of Coast Guard resources is permitted. What constitutes a "limited and *de minimis*" level of resource support is a matter of discretion and will typically be supported as long as the expenditures are insubstantial and prudent).
- (2) Participation in the partnership is **voluntary**, and unit and individual participation will be as workload and operations permit. Some units will be able to provide extensive support for the partnership, while others may not. However, given the Coast Guard's history of humanitarian and community service, it is hoped that the entire Coast Guard family will embrace this partnership as a worthwhile endeavor. In that sense, this partnership should be viewed as an opportunity, not an obligation.
- (3) The Coast Guard and its personnel (active duty, civilian - including NAF - employees, reservists, and auxiliarists), while acting in an official capacity or while on duty are prohibited from engaging in fund-raising activities on behalf of First Book. Also, Coast Guard personnel, while acting in an official capacity, may not hold a managing position or serve on the board of directors of a LAB. However, Coast Guard personnel may serve as non-voting liaisons to the LAB. These restrictions do not apply to Coast Guard personnel acting in a purely private capacity, outside the Coast Guard partnership, or to family members or retirees.
- (4) The OPM Director's Memorandum on Volunteer Activities (1998) provides guidance on civilian employee participation in supporting the partnership during the workday. Because this

partnership is officially sponsored by the Coast Guard and is an extension of our Partnership In Education program and outreach efforts, civilian (including NAF) employee participation in the partnership during the workday is considered an excused absence, provided the supervisor considers the civilian employee's participation to be in the best interest of the Coast Guard and it is for a reasonable period of time.

- (5) Nothing in this Instruction is intended to supercede or conflict with applicable standards of conduct or other legal requirements.

Encl: (1) Memorandum of Agreement Between the United States Coast Guard and First Book