
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release #58-15

May 15, 2015

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Ready for the Next Step - Sailors Graduate to Support Fleet Religious Needs

COLUMBIA, S.C. – A class of 12 Religious Program Specialists (RPs) graduated from the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center (NCSC) at Fort Jackson, May 15.

“I have learned that patience is a virtue, always pay attention to detail, and be flexible,” said Religious Program Specialist Seamen Apprentice Shamella Deacon.

Guest speaker Senior Chief Religious Program Specialist Scott Shields, NCSC's command senior chief, explained the importance of two words, vigilance and faith.

“Vigilance is an attribute of the service member. It is built upon continuous and stressful training cycles and therefore, vigilance is the result of learned and practiced behaviors,” Shields said. “My view about faith here is not just about that trust and bond between man and God, but the trust forged between shipmates.”

RPs graduate with a diverse skill set of administrative, technical, and logistical capabilities. Joining with chaplains, they are part of each command's Religious Ministry Team (RMT).

Religious Program Specialist Second Class Sheri Russell, spent seven years as a Damage Controlman serving tours aboard ship and on shore before attending RP "A" School. "I have enjoyed the hands-on training at NCSC, especially the segment where RP students interacted with the Basic Leadership Course chaplains," Russell said. "This helps RPs learn and understand that chaplains are relatable and although an officer, very approachable."

Russell has orders to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Chapel where she says she is anxious to apply her newly acquired skills.

Honor Graduate, Religious Program Specialist Seaman Jason Mills will join the RMT aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77). "I liked the hands on learning in labs of varying religious services and how they are supposed to be set up by an RP," Mills said. "The instructors are valuable in how they have prepared us for the sea service through classroom material and life experiences."

Capt. Mark Smith, a chaplain, and NCSC's commanding officer is proud of the training that the RP "A" School graduates receive.

"These Sailors have been launched on a journey of lifelong commitment to professional curiosity with a strong sense of honor in the special role they have pledged to have in the Navy, always remembering that it is to the sea that the Navy has been sent. Religious ministry has a long history of going

over the horizon in support of the spiritual wholeness of Sailors. These Sailors are ready to join that long maritime heritage and share in the proud accomplishments of the United States Navy.”

For more news from the Chaplain Corps, visit
<http://www.navy.mil/local/crb/>.

For information about the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, visit
<https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/chaplain/>.

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