

NETC News

Naval Education and Training Command
Public Affairs Office (Code N00P)
250 Dallas Street
Pensacola, FL 32508-5220

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release #117-14

Nov. 24, 2014

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Submarine Learning Center Names 2014 Instructors of the Year

GROTON, Conn. - The Submarine Learning Center (SLC) in Groton, Conn. announced Nov. 24 the top instructors from its submarine training sites as the 2014 Instructors of the Year (IOY).

Capt. David Roberts, SLC commanding officer, praised those selected and all Sailors across the domain considered for the honor, while congratulating Machinist's Mate 2nd Class (Submarines) Alberto Najjar, Jr., Sonar Technician 1st Class (Submarines) Alexis Helwig, Chief Machinist's Mate (Submarines) Royce Glenn and Lt. Erik Sunday, on their selections.

"These outstanding instructors epitomize the definition of Instructor Quality (IQ)," said Roberts. "Each has proven their subject matter expertise and unmatched instructional technique as qualified Master Training Specialists."

“Their commitment to student level knowledge and performance, coupled with their passion for submarining is a true testament to their professionalism and love of teaching,” Roberts added.

Sunday, from Submarine Learning Facility (SLF) Norfolk, Va., is the Officer Instructor of the Year. According to his nomination package, Sunday’s professional demeanor and exceptional leadership abilities culminated in his rapid qualification as Course Supervisor for two junior officer formal courses: Submerged Contact Management and Master Training Specialist (MTS). He was also essential in the initiation of a newly-formed Submerged Contact Management Course, assisting in the planning, administration and delivery of five successful conveyings.

Sunday compared his first fleet assignment, USS Philadelphia (SSN-690), followed by his tour as assistant operations officer aboard USS Boise (SSN-764) to his instructional assignment at SLF.

“It didn’t take me long to appreciate that teaching students in a classroom setting is just as challenging as much of the training I provided for my crews at divisional and ship-wide levels on sea-duty,” Sunday said.

Glenn, from TRIDENT Training Facility (TTF), Bangor Wash., is the SLF Senior Enlisted IOY. Glenn is a high-risk instructor for damage control and fire fighting. He provided leadership for 10 instructors delivering expert instruction to more than 1,300 students.

Glenn’s nomination detailed how as a MTS mentor, he not only positively influenced Damage Control Division Sailors and aided in the improvement of

instructional technique and knowledge for more than 130 instructors throughout TTF Bangor.

“I enjoy being a trainer and a teacher,” said Glenn. “But most especially being a leader in the continuing and continuous improvement of my Sailors’ and their successful careers. I pride myself in finding new ways to engage my students and to make the material as fresh and applicable to them as I can. I feel instructors are the most vital asset in our Navy. We are the ones responsible for training recruits, training the fleet and training our fellow instructors.”

Helwig, Naval Submarine Training Center Pacific (NSTCP), Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, is the SLC Enlisted IOY. As a Modernization Training Team (MTT) instructor, Helwig delivered over 500 hours of employment training to six Pacific Fleet submarine crews, two Submarine Command Course classes and NSTCP staff members.

According to his nomination, Helwig’s expert instructional technique and in-depth curriculum development were vital in serving as a Master Training Specialist Mentor and his energy and efforts in mentoring other instructors has resulted in a growing number of successful MTS certifications.

“Being a good instructor,” said Helwig, “is not something that’s confined to or defined by what happens in a classroom. Your ability as a facilitator, a guide, and leader helps your students successfully manage external disruptions and distractions which can compromise their performance in the classroom. You have to help them be prepared emotionally, mentally and physically to be ready to learn.”

Najar, Jr., Submarine Learning Facility (SLF) Norfolk, Virginia, is the Junior Enlisted Instructor of the Year. Najar was responsible for the instruction and course maintenance of two Auxiliary Division courses and five High-Risk Training courses and was instrumental in the preparation and training of five Los Angeles Class submarines, three Virginia Class submarines and two Ohio Class submarines for initial crew certifications, pre-deployment training and responsive training scenarios.

Najar's nomination package detailed his work as the Assistant Course Supervisor for two Automated Electrolytic Oxygen Generator courses and how he was instrumental in the start-up of the only Oxygen Clean Worker course on the East Coast, a mandatory prerequisite for the Oxygen Generator course qualification projected to save the Navy \$50,000 a year in travel and lodging costs for Sailors requiring this certification.

"It's a challenging job," Najar said. "It is also very rewarding, especially when you see a Sailor you trained combine his ability and the knowledge that you helped develop and applies it on his boat to help accomplish the mission. In a sense, you were part of that crew as well; your student's success is also yours."

The SLC Sailors will next compete in the annual Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) IOY competition in Pensacola, Fla., which recognizes instructors who exemplify personal excellence and display outstanding instructional and leadership performance.

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Story by William Kenny

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