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COAST GUARD AUXILIARY DIVISION 16 WINS TOP HONORS AT D-SAR

The U.S. Coast Guard's 8th District – Western Rivers Region and Auxiliary 15, hosted the District's 2009 Search & Rescue Competition (D-SAR), on Lake Dardanelle located at Russellville, Arkansas, on May 22-23, 2009. The event included 5 D-SAR teams from throughout the 12 state district and began on Thursday evening with the Boating Knowledge exam. On Friday, May 22nd, teams competed in SAR Planning and Execution, Communications and Rescue and Assistance. The second day, May 23rd, consisted of skills competition such as Heaving Line, Fire Pump Drill and Marlinspike.

The event concluded Saturday night with an Awards Banquet. Chief Warrant Officer Douglas Leavell announced that Auxiliary Division 16 from Oklahoma was the 2009 Champion Team. Division 8, Iowa and Eastern Missouri, was runner up in the competition. Individual awards went to COMO Marshall Bullard, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma of Division 16 for Boating Knowledge and Eric Vestal, Fordland Missouri, of Division 5 for Overall Skills. Bill Slusser, Peoria, Illinois, Division 8, was awarded the OTO Inspirational Award.

The event was well attended with approximately 90 Auxiliaryist as well as Captain Michael Gardiner, Commander Sector Lower Mississippi, Commander Todd Campbell, 8th Western Rivers Region Director of Auxiliary and Chief Warrant Officer Douglas Leavell, Event Coordinator/Head Judge. Robert Smekta, Eight Western Rivers District Chief of Staff, COMO Jack Gumb, 8WR District Chief of Response and Blain Selby of Division 15 (IPDCDR) was the onsite coordinator.

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8th Western Rivers 2009 Champion D-SAR Team: Front Row L-R, COMO Marshall Bullard, David Starr, Charles Ingle, and Jose Reira.
Second Row: L-R, CWO Dougl's Leavell, D-COS Robert Smekta, CDR Todd Campbell and CAPT Michael Gardiner.

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is composed of uniformed, non-military volunteer members who assist the Coast Guard in all of its varied missions, except for military and direct law enforcement. These men and women can be found on the nation's waterways, in the air, in classrooms and on the dock, performing Maritime Domain Awareness patrols, safety patrols, vessel safety checks and public education.