

***Focus on Service***  
***Chief, CAP Chaplain Service***  
**Commanders carry burden, but chaplains can help**  
***Chap. (Lt. Col.) James Hughes***  
***Secretary, Chaplain Service Advisory Council***

Since Chaplain (Col.) Jim Melancon and I share May birthdays, he has graciously allowed me to write the chaplain's column this month.

During my service with CAP I have come to admire a group of people who work tirelessly and selflessly for their communities and for their nation. These are the commanders of Civil Air Patrol squadrons, groups, wings and regions. They carry the burden of recruiting, training and motivating a group of people to accomplish some of the most difficult missions our country asks of its citizens. These missions must be accomplished effectively, professionally and at a moment's notice while maintaining the standards set by the organization. Issues of administration, personnel, recognition and staffing all flow through the commander.

What is so amazing about CAP is that it is all accomplished with volunteers. The missions and programs of the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force are all achieved with the discretionary time of its members.

Working with volunteers is very different from working with employees. Volunteers can leave, quit or be uncooperative at any time without the fear of salary consequences. Commanders do not have the leverage with someone that a boss might have such as establishing the amount of time each person will devote to their work or determining the length of the work day. They cannot offer raises in salary as a reward for excellent work or reductions in salary for poor performance.

Because squadrons and staffs are not put together through a hiring process, commanders must function with the skills, motivation and training available in the active members. In many cases, commanders have no choice but to accept the limitations imposed by existing resources even though the expectations surrounding the mission have not changed.

The commander must also balance the needs of the mission with the desires of the members. If the members are not enjoying themselves, feeling appreciated or having a sense of accomplishment, then the mission may go unfulfilled. Any disharmony between the members themselves can also jeopardize their involvement and the survival of the unit.

Leadership in Civil Air Patrol, especially for commanders, is more a function of influence than authority. The mistake that I have seen commanders make at all levels of CAP is to forget that this is a volunteer organization. The military structure, titles, and appearances do not change the nature of an individual's connection to the program. CAP members are neither drafted nor hired. They serve because they choose to serve.

This is the point where commanders need to know that there is help available for them. On their staff there is a person who, more than likely, has made a career out of working with volunteers. Normally, this person has years of experience working with the unique challenges and problems that a volunteer organization produces. And in most cases, this person has not only survived, but prospered in that environment. This person is the chaplain.

The chaplain can be an insightful resource for the commander in the issues that effect many aspects of CAP life. The recruiting, training, and motivating of volunteers is the lifeblood of pastoral and non-pastoral ministry as it is true for CAP. The commander who has the aid of a chaplain has access to a wealth of experience and training needed to make a volunteer organization run as smoothly as possible.

Here are some ways the experience of the chaplain can be a direct benefit to the commander.

**The chaplain brings an understanding of the dynamics of a volunteer organization.**

- ▶ In motivating volunteers, the chaplain can advise the commander on the necessities and impact of encouragement, reward, appreciation, organization and training;
- ▶ By helping to clarify the mission, the unit, whether it is a squadron, group or wing, becomes more effective and cohesive. Though the overall purpose and mission of Civil Air Patrol is well defined, the lack of understanding and ownership of those missions can lead to the fragmentation of the unit. From their experience of ministry, Chaplains are aware of the tendency of volunteer groups to fragment over time and can advise the commander on what steps to take to avoid such difficulties.
- ▶ There is a significant need in all units of CAP for ritual and ceremony. In ministry settings, the identity of the congregation is found in its worship experience. The Chaplain brings an abundance of understanding of the impact of ritual in maintaining and expanding a volunteer group.

4 Because volunteers have to choose to be involved, the commander's leadership style is vital to the functioning of the unit. The chaplain can draw upon the experiences of ministry to offer advice on what is an appropriate approach for the CAP unit. Leadership that is upbeat, encouraging, hopeful, people-focused and enabling tends to work best with volunteers.

**The Chaplain brings skills in communication.**

- ▶ Through spoken word, members are trained, motivated, corrected and integrated into the program. The chaplain can be helpful to the commander concerning how to say things that help, include and inspire.
- ▶ Through written word, the activities of CAP are promoted, recorded and described. The chaplain's background is focused on articulating in a persuasive way.

Being a CAP commander demands many more skills than most people have. The efficient use of the resources of a staff could make the difference between success and failure of the unit's mission and even its survival. A chaplain's experience and training can make a valuable contribution to the effective work of a CAP commander.