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Citizen's Action Network Finalist for Prestigious Award

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Citizen's Action Network Finalist for Prestigious Award

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Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government has recently announced that the Citizen's Action Network program is a finalist for the Noblis Award in Homeland Security. This award recognizes the finest programs across the nation helping to secure the safety of America. Commander Andre Billeaudeau, founder of the Citizen's Action Network (CAN) credits much of the programs successes in the past year and a half to the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS). The Coast Guard has announced that it will roll the CAN program out nationally in the near future.



Billeaudeau, the Public Affairs Officer for the Thirteenth Coast Guard District and NPS Master's Degree student started the program in 1999 when it became clear the Coast Guard needed to be creative in order to expand its maritime force.

CAN is comprised of more than 500 volunteers who include international citizens, tribal members and businesses located throughout the Northwestern United States and Canada. Volunteers live directly on the waterfront and possess a clear view of the coast line and waterways. They work in partnership with the Coast Guard, alerting one another of possible threats on the waters.

The Coast Guard is able to dispatch volunteers on demand via a Coast Guard to CAN member phone call or by sending regional automated telephone alerts. The citizens become additional eyes and ears for the Coast Guard, monitoring everything from oil spills to terrorist threats.

Billeaudeau is currently working toward completing his Master's Degree thesis. His thesis, "Empowering Citizens as a Force Multiplier in Maritime Domain Awareness," examines the existing group of CAN volunteers to determine the attributes of success and the factors that make these citizens inclined to civic engagement and vigilance.

He believes that many of the core concepts that make CAN successful are being taught in his NPS courses. "... each professor I've studied with here has emphasized a web of core concepts which ultimately feed into the network. It has been most enlightening to meet and learn from others who believe in the same approach," said Billeaudeau.

"I just received word this week that our Coast Guard HQ is planning on utilizing CAN as the implementation model for a nation wide system. I'll just hand my thesis to the planning and implementation team back East and let them take it to the next level."

CAN also received the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary's Award for Excellence in May 2006 for its innovation and implementation of a program that improves maritime security awareness. The award, presented by Secretary Michael Chertoff, recognizes outstanding achievement or innovation by a distinguished employee(s) engaged in work to further the mission of DHS.

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