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## Shasha Rises to the Highest Rank of Local U.S. Naval Sea Cadets

By Anne W. Semmes

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Jessica Shasha, 18, of Riverside is a go getter. Home schooled by her family, she stepped outside for an extraordinary experience. For five years, from the age of 13, she signed on to be a part of U.S.



Jessica Shasha (Contributed photo)

Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC), the Navy's youth program.

Shasha rose to the highest rank possible for a Sea Cadet as Chief Petty Officer (CFO). No mean feat as she was only the fifth Cadet to do so in her Stamford-based Dealey Division in its almost 50-year history. And she was the first female to do so.

"It's hard to get it (CFO ranking)," said Shasha, "As there are six different rankings, and a six month waiting period for each rank."

Add in three mandatory training sessions, including boot camp. "You need a lot of time and a lot of motivation and a lot of training," said Shasha.

Shasha learned a lot about motivation over a year ago when she entered Petty Officer Leadership Academy between Christmas and New Years of 2006-2007. Held at the U.S. Naval Base in Newport, R.I., she received the same training the "the Navy chiefs" were getting, taught by the "master chiefs of the Navy."

"There was a lot of teaching of how every person is different, understanding different people," she said, "and motivating people to be leaders in service and in everyday life." Shasha learned, she said, "how to motivate people, how to lead people."

But Shasha also has talent as an artist and is headed this fall to the Art Institute of Boston on a full scholarship. "I'm good at art," she said, "and this is what I've chosen to do."

She said she chose the Sea Cadets because her best friend from her home schooling days had a brother entering the Naval Academy in Annapolis. "It looked good for college (admissions)," she added.

She enjoyed those five years. She learned sailing in their advance training on a "75-foot yacht," she said.

Every April at the Massachusetts Military Reservation's Camp Edwards on Cape Cod, a Flagship Competition of nautical contests is held of knot tying, signal flag recognition and marching, which her Dealey Division has won three out of her five years, she said.

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The Dealey Division is the first Sea Cadet unit established in New England, and is sponsored by the Western Connecticut Council of the United States Navy League.

Thelma Hoyt, board member of the League, reported there were 20 Sea Cadets this year.

"They are the cream of the crop kids," she said, "Intelligent and outstanding.

"They are not obligated to serve in Navy," said Hoyt, but are able to go aboard Navy and Coast Guard ships.

"The majority of our Cadets do not go forward into the military," said Jennifer Stannard, the Commanding Officer of the Dealey Division. She called Jessica Shasha "a great example of a young person who made the most out of the leadership training and other opportunities the Cadet program provides."

The 45-year old Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC) program is for ages 14-17, and the Navy League Cadet Corps (NLCC) is for 11-13 years old. Both organizations are for youth who are interested in the sea and ships, and who have a desire to learn more about the nation's seagoing services - the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine.

The Dealey Division was named after a WWII legend in the submarine service, Commander Samuel Dealey, who was awarded the Medal of Honor, four Navy Crosses and the Silver Star. He and his crew served on the submarine USS Harder, which was built in Groton.

The objectives of the Sea Cadet program are: To build strong character in terms of honesty, reliability, self-respect, respect for others, self-reliance and kindred virtues; to develop principles

of patriotism and good citizenship; to encourage and aid American youth to develop an interest and skills in basic seamanship and its naval and Coast Guard adaptations; and to provide cadets the opportunity to develop and exercise leadership skills.

For more information, visit [www.dealeydivision.org](http://www.dealeydivision.org).

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