

## South Florida CGEA is Born

*Story and Photo by PA3 Barry J. Bena, District Seven Public Affairs*

Coast Guard members stationed throughout South Florida have officially christened the Greater Miami Coast Guard Enlisted Association during a ceremony Dec. 27, 2007 at Coast Guard Air Station Miami.

Throughout the years, Miami has been without a CGEA but with the dedication of a few, a Greater Miami CGEA is finding its place.

“We help our communities and our shipmates any way we can,” said Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Amberlei Folsom, president of the CGEA of Greater Miami. “The CGEA will basically do anything to shed a positive light on the Coast Guard within the community.”

The newly established CGEA chapter wasted no time and kicked off its first community project Dec. 29.

More than 20 Coast Guard members, families and friends kayaked one mile from Sunset Boat Ramp near Island View Park in Miami Beach to Monument Island to aid in the environmental cleanup campaign. The team walked the shoreline and worked for several hours removing 40 bags of trash from the island.

“We have plans to do events like these at least four times a year,” said Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Linda Linders, vice president of the Greater Miami CGEA.

The Greater Miami CGEA has held monthly meetings to discuss future fund-raisers and community projects.

The first fundraiser was a Jan. 30 car wash at Sector Miami. The money collected from this event helped junior enlisted members offset the cost of attending the Coast Guard Ball in Doral, Fla. The CGEA raised \$550 by washing more than 30 cars within four hours.

The money generated by this type of fundraising event can help a Coast Guardsman or their family during their time of need, Linders said.



*Petty Officer 3rd Class (AET) Darryl Linders from Coast Guard Air Station Miami and Petty Officer 2nd Class (YN) Amberlei Folsom from Coast Guard District Seven pick up trash from Monument Island in Miami Dec. 29. Folsom and Linders, both members of the Coast Guard Enlisted Association of Greater Miami, took part in the emergency clean up of Monument Island.*

“While in Key West, I had a death in my family and spent all my money on airfare traveling home,” said Folsom. “The CGEA went ahead and cut me a check for \$200 to help defray the costs.”

The CGEA is a non-profit organization formed in the early 1990’s under the Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Association and is comprised of active-duty and reserve E-6 and below, and all Coast Guard Auxiliarists. CGEA goals include sponsoring social programs, being active in community affairs, helping Coast Guard members and their families in need and assisting the CPOA in their endeavors.

To keep the momentum going, the Greater Miami CGEA encourages members to come out and join. Membership dues are only \$2 a month or members can choose to pay a \$24 annual fee -- just a small price to pay to be a part of a great organization and for the satisfaction you’ll feel as a CGEA member.

**USCG**