

Recruiters Concentrate Efforts, 'Swarm' in Key Markets



Chief Navy Counselor Jamal Clarke uses virtual reality goggles to show a student at University High School what it's like to serve in the U.S. Navy during "Swarm" Orlando. Eighty-one recruiters from Navy Recruiting Command, Navy Recruiting District Jacksonville and the Navy's virtual reality asset, the Nimitz, make up a "swarming team." U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kyle Hafer

Sporting spectacles such as the Pro Bowl and Boston Marathon draw big crowds. Now they are also drawing swarms of U.S. Navy recruiters.

Recruiters have always gravitated to where the potential applicants may be, to talk about Navy opportunities. Navy Recruiting Command initiated "swarming" in December 2018, to bring extra recruiters and resources together for high-profile events.

"This concept will give us the ability to support bigger events with heightened visibility while bolstering prospecting, increasing Navy awareness and closing leads," said Rear Adm. Brendan McLane, commander of Navy Recruiting Command.

"We focus on big events and bring in our top recruiters from around the country to take advantage of the increased attention which those events have. We ran a pilot right before Christmas in Miami for two back-to-back Miami Heat NBA games," McLane said.

The Miami swarm included 55 recruiting personnel who visited 12 high schools, three community outreach events and attended two Miami Heat-Houston Rockets basketball games Dec. 17-22.



Students at Jackson Elementary School help Navy Counselor 1st Class Angel Rodriguez get up during "Swarm" Minneapolis. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication 2nd Class Kyle Hafer

"It was very successful, and we followed that with the Pro Bowl in January, which also coincided with a military expo focused on high

school kids in Orlando. We did the Mobile Navy Week in Alabama at the end of

February. And then in March, we were at the Minnesota Ice Hockey State

Championship in Minneapolis and the Boston Marathon in April," McLane said. "We

bring in our best instructors from the Recruiting Academy, and the recruiters of

the year from the other districts, as a way of recognizing them, and we swarm.

We visit the high schools in much larger groups than we usually do."

McLane said groups of recruiters visit a number of high schools to make presentations in the classrooms, particularly about STEM

subjects, to drive recruitment for the nuclear field and other advanced career

fields. "We also invest in local media about 14 days before the event."



Naval Aircrewman (Tactical Helicopter) 2nd Class Rachel Crepean, a rescue swimmer assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 71, speaks to the Edgewater High School Junior ROTC about Navy special warfare during "Swarm" Orlando. (U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kyle Hafer

According to Interior Communications Electrician 1st Class Hilary A. Martin, assigned to Navy Recruiting District, Raleigh, and a participant in the Miami swarm, the Navy can offer young people an education, health care and travel, a chance to serve their country and a career. "I'm a communications electrician, and I work with some of the most advanced systems and equipment, which not only is exciting but helps prepare me for other jobs when I eventually get out of the Navy."

The swarm includes one of CNRC's two virtual reality trucks, which offers young people the chance to put on a 360-degree virtual reality headset with amazing graphics and become immersed in a tactical scenario. "You get a dog tag that has your info on it and then you become a special boat driver who has to go into a hot extraction point to get the SEALs out, and drive them back down the river," McLane said. "After your mission, you get your debrief, and you can see if you performed as well as your friends."



During "Surge" Boston, Sailors assigned to various Navy recruiting districts and talent acquisition groups conduct presentations at Everett High School about the Navy's nuclear programs. (U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Zachary S. Eshleman

"The centennial generation have grown up with the internet and technology, so we appeal to them with things like virtual reality goggles where they get to see a 360-degree view on a carrier flight deck and more,"

said Capt. Matthew Boren, Navy Recruiting Command's chief marketing officer.

"They want to see it, and we have the virtual reality truck where they can go on a virtual mission to extract a SEAL team. We are a technical Navy with some of the most high-tech combat systems in the world, so we need really well-trained and smart operators that have the skills to run those systems."

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"All these things combined drive the number of contacts up, which leads to higher numbers of interviews, which leads to greater numbers of contracts,"

McLane said. "That leads to recruits graduating and going on to [initial job training] "A" schools so they can fill; vital billets in the fleet."

McLane said the plan is ensure that there are an equal number of swarms in both the east and west recruiting regions. "You can count on swarming events occurring every month throughout the nation."

Edward Lundquist traveled to Navy Recruiting Command's headquarters in Millington, Tennessee, to report this story.