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USS BELOIT COMMISSIONING COMMITTEE BEGINS FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

June 12, 2024 – The USS Beloit Commissioning Committee is beginning its work to celebrate the future commissioning of the USS Beloit. The launch of the committee and the fundraising campaign was announced Tuesday at Fairbanks Morse Defense.

While a date and location for the commissioning will be announced in the future by the U.S. Navy, work is underway locally in Beloit. Led by the committee's chair, Vice Admiral Dirk Debbink, U.S. Navy (retired), the committee is beginning to plan commissioning events, fundraising, ship artwork, crew gifts and more. The ship's sponsor is Major General Marcia Anderson, U.S. Army (retired), a Beloit native with an outstanding legacy of military service.

A Navy Commissioning formally places the ship into service. The Commissioning Week celebrates the namesake city and the first crew to sail the ship.

"It is a one-of-a-kind ceremony," said Debbink. "You will see the sailors running aboard the ship, man all of their stations, start spinning the radars, the gun will start moving, and they will actually bring the ship into life."

The USS Beloit is a Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship. The U.S. Navy announced in October 2018 that LCS 29 would bear the name of Beloit. The people of Beloit have built the engines that power these Navy vessels through the work at Fairbanks Morse Defense. The community of nearly 37,000 people has a rich history of supporting the military and our nation's Veterans, especially through VetsRoll, a non-profit organization that provides life-changing trips for Veterans to visit the war memorials in Washington, D.C.

The start of the Commissioning Committee signals the official relationship between the city and ship's crew. The Commissioning Committee will look to impart the spirit of Beloit into the ship through artwork and decorations.

As part of the Commissioning plans, the crew of the USS Beloit has launched an audition contest for Beloit area students age 19 and younger to have the opportunity of a lifetime to sing the National Anthem in front of thousands of guests at the commissioning. Students



can send video auditions to ussbeloitthem@gmail.com. Interested singers should include a full video with background information, name, school, age, and contact information.

The commissioning committee is comprised of individuals from Beloit-area businesses and organizations, as well as residents. In addition to Debbink serving as chair, the following individuals are in a leadership role on the committee:

- Drew Pennington (City of Beloit/Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation); Chief of Staff
- Mark Finnegan (VetsRoll); Finance & Fundraising Chair
- Shawn Sullivan (Morse Group); Crew Activities & Gifts Chair
- Celestino Ruffini (Visit Beloit); Invitations Chair
- Sarah Lock (City of Beloit); Social Events & PR Chair

A fundraising campaign is now underway for the Commissioning Week events, ship gifts, ship artwork, transportation, and more. A donor information sheet and donation form can be located at www.ussbeloit.org/donations. Any donations raised beyond the requirements for Commissioning Week will be put toward a legacy fund for the crew's unmet needs.

"We are looking to showcase the Beloit community throughout the Commissioning Week," Lock said. "Our community's spirit will live on the ship with each sailor knowing that the ship is powered by the people of Beloit."

Events will be planned in Beloit and at the future commissioning site. Follow the USS Beloit Commissioning Committee on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ussbeloitcommissioning.

Learn more about the USS Beloit Commissioning Committee at www.ussbeloit.org.

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