

Title: Sector Upper Mississippi River is LEANing IN



By: LCDR Kathryn Moretti and Ms. Christine Woodard

Sector Upper Mississippi River is harnessing the power of peer support while developing leadership best practices by standing up and participating in a Lean In Circle. Lean In Circles are small peer groups (8-12 members) who meet monthly to learn and grow together. These meetings enable both female and male active duty and civilians to come together to share experiences and advice on overcoming challenges in the workplace and encourage and support each other in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust.

In September 2015, the DoD partnered with LeanIn.Org to launch Lean In Circles throughout the department and all military branches including the United States Coast Guard. With the support of Sector Upper Mississippi River's Commander, Captain Marty Malloy, Lieutenant Commander Katie Moretti and Ms. Christine Woodard stood up the Sector's Lean In Circle in June 2016. The circle, aptly named *The Mighty Mississippi Metamorphosis*, meets once a month to discuss leadership best practices with a defined purpose: To learn and grow together, becoming stronger and more understanding leaders, sharing with our shipmates the lessons learned through our circle.

The group, open to all Sector Upper Mississippi River members, has already explored a variety of topics touching on self awareness and learning, health and well-being, effective communications, and influencing others. One meeting focused on "centered leadership" and the concept of work-life balance, where members evaluated personal energy sources and draining activities. The group then developed strategies to create time every day to focus on energy renewal and recovery. At another meeting, participants listened to a TED Talk titled "The Power of Introverts," by Susan Cain. The remaining time was spent first evaluating themselves on the Introvert-Extrovert spectrum and then identifying

positive characteristics of both types that could be employed in the work environment to increase productivity. Participants left the meeting feeling energized with a better understanding of themselves and/or their peers, superiors or subordinates, and with tips for how to encourage work productivity based on personal style.

The Mighty Mississippi Metamorphosis is a member of the Lean In Military Chapter, which currently has 110 Circles and is almost 2,000 members strong. The Military Chapter is committed to recruiting and retaining the very best of the Nation's talent and values the strengths inherent in its diverse workforce. "It's an investment in our people and our future—to boost morale, to make us more productive, and to hopefully build more diversity in our leadership," Ash Carter, Secretary of Defense, said. "It's not just the right thing to do, it's the right thing for our military."

There are currently over 29,000 Circles in 147 countries. This number is increasing every day as people, particularly women, realize the value of peer group support for growth. Research has shown people are more confident and can learn and accomplish more in small groups. This is evidenced by over 85% of circle members crediting their Circle with a positive change in their life.

LeanIn.Org makes it easy to start your own circle and hold monthly meetings. The site provides in-depth instructions on discussion questions, icebreakers, and group exercises, each labeled with guidelines for how many minutes should be spent to ensure a timely meeting.

LCDR Moretti and Ms. Woodard have also set up a USCG Chapter for other USCG Circles to join. The Chapter was established to encourage networking and idea sharing with other USCG Circles. If you have questions about setting up your own Circle or joining the USCG Chapter, please go to LeanIn.Org or contact the authors.

Leadership Competencies Addressed: Self Awareness and Learning, Health and Well-Being, Effective Communications, Influencing Others, Respect for Others and Diversity Management, Team Building, Taking Care of People, and Mentoring