



USS Columbia and Columbia, Missouri celebrate 16th anniversary

Did you know that Columbia, Missouri has been a submarine's namesake city for 16 years? Since the USS Columbia's launch on September 24, 1994, Columbia, Illinois, Columbia, South Carolina and Columbia, Missouri have shared the namesake honor.

Thanks to the support of local organizations such as the VFW Ladies Auxiliary and citizens on the Columbia Submarine Committee, our community sponsors one of the Navy's longest, continuously active namesake city programs. Based at Pearl Harbor, USS Columbia crewmembers have participated in Memorial Day activities all but one year since 1994.

In May 2010, the crew will visit Columbia once again over Memorial Day Weekend. USS Columbia Commander Craig Blakey and his wife, Joni, will lead the delegation, which also includes Chief of the Boat (COB) Don Williams and Petty Officer Charles Laymon.

A public reception will be held 5-6:30 p.m. with mayoral welcome at 5:30 p.m., Friday, May 28 at Boone Tavern. The crew will attend the Salute to Veterans Airshow, ride in the Memorial Day parade with the Big Muddy Chapter of World War II Submarine Veterans and participate in the wreath-laying ceremony. An itinerary is posted at www.GoColumbiaMo.com.



History of the USS Columbia namesake partnership

Former mayor Mary Anne McCollum led the Columbia, Missouri delegation that attended the USS Columbia's christening in Groton, CT, September 24, 1994. Delegations from Columbia, Illinois and Columbia, South Carolina also attended. That ceremony was the last of its kind, as the USS Columbia was "The Last Slider" – the last submarine to be launched in the United States by sliding down the building ways into the water.

The original Columbia Submarine Committee was appointed by Mayor McCollum to establish and maintain close ties with the crew of the USS Columbia. Since then, USS Columbia crewmembers have visited Columbia over Memorial Day Weekend every year, except one.

In April 2009, at Captain Craig Blakely's invitation, Mayor and Mrs. Hindman led a Columbia, Missouri delegation that participated in a VIP tour and demonstration of the submarine. (All delegates paid their own expenses.)

Several original "plankowners" still serve on the Columbia Submarine Committee, currently chaired by Ms. Anne Moore. Primary funding for the USS Columbia namesake program is provided by VFW Post 290 Ladies Auxiliary. Additional support comes from the Muddy MO Chapter - WWII Submarine Veterans, Flat Branch Pub & Brewing, Boone Tavern, Holiday Inn Select - Executive Center, the Columbia chapter U.S. Submarine Veterans, Inc. (USSVI) and D & M Sound. Lt. Michael Keating with MU Navy ROTC and Renee Graham with the City of Columbia's Public Communications Office provide logistical support.

For more information about the program, please contact Renee Graham at 573-874-7316 or email PCO@GoColumbiaMo.com.

