**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

**27 December 2018**

Who Takes Care of Coast Guardsmen When They Aren’t Paid?

Century-old Charity Devoted to Helping Those Who Help

 **Arlington, VA—December 27, 2018 —** Before the partial government shutdown, Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) was positioned to help members of the Coast Guard and their families as they weathered ups and downs in their lives. By attending to their financial needs, CGMA supports the mission readiness of Coast Guard members as they respond to the needs of the public. During Hurricanes Florence and Michael just a few short months ago, Mutual Assistance initially funded evacuations and hotel costs, and later supporting military members who returned to damaged or uninhabitable homes.

 “Our mission is to care for our own,” said Cari Thomas, Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard (retired), Chief Executive Officer at Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA). “It is hard when the Coast Guard that you love doesn’t have the ability to pay you. It impacts you, your family, and your home. I have lived through earlier government shutdowns, and know first-hand how much life at home impacts your life at work. That is why we help those who help the public.”

# **Helping Members and Families of Military**

Each payday, the Coast Guard needs $150 million to pay its workforce to perform their essential missions. Those essential missions demand specialists in environmental protection, search and rescue, port security and drug interdiction and the support personnel to perform them. However, as of December 22, there is no funding to pay its employees. Meanwhile to date in 2018, 2600+ Coast Guard families have been helped with $5.1 million of financial assistance. This included [storm relief](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLY2yQcjDK0&t=14s), some local [emergency situations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w--3H2_QvU4), routine unexpected support like travel for a family funeral, and family support including adoptions, special needs children, and education support. The uncertainty regarding the partial government shutdown is a stressor particularly for military families who may not have the strong local support networks.

**Doing What They Can**

With limited funds and donations largely flat at $2 million annually and no revenue inbound from donations or loan payments from members paychecks, the charity will provide about 18%-30% of a junior enlisted or civilian members pay as a stop gap measure during this period. It is not enough. As the President of the Coast Guard Enlisted Association said today, “It does not suffice. Our members are stressed, desperate, and feel forgotten.”

But, CGMA asks everyone to work together to help in the same way everyone comes together to help conduct Coast Guard missions. Local businesses, landlords, utility districts, banking institutions all play a role in the day to day financial wellness of the men and women who serve the Coast Guard. “The stories break my heart,” said Sean Fennell, a retired Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer and Chief Operating Officer for Mutual Assistance. “Coast Guardsmen sacrifice so much, and we are doing what we can to minimize the impact at home and their lives.”

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance is one of four Military Aid Societies that collectively helps 2.5 million service members and their families. Congressionally sanctioned, the others include the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Air Force Aid Society and Army Emergency Relief.

The charity provides grants and no-interest loans for needs such as disaster relief, education, and family support. If anyone from the Coast Guard, active duty, reserve, civilian, Auxiliarist or retiree needs help, they can call toll free: (800) 881-2462 or email: cgma@cgmahq.org.

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Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) is a 501(c)(3), headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. Serving as the official aid society for the United States Coast Guard, CGMA provides essential financial aid to the entire Coast Guard community through interest-free loans, grants, and financial counseling. CGMA helps with a wide range of challenging financial issues and major life transitions. This support normally includes educational benefits, disaster relief, emergency assistance, medical, dental, and housing assistance; however some programs are currently suspended to provide for others support. With diverse and expanding programs, Mutual Assistance is poised to provide timely and reliable support to 131,000+ active duty military men and women, reserve members, civilian employees, Auxiliary (volunteers), retirees and their families.

Since its inception in 1924, CGMA has provided over $187 million in direct assistance. Its work is performed by collateral duty Coast Guardsmen at 140 local Coast Guard units.

# For more information about CGMA:

[www.cgmahq.org](http://www.cgmahq.org)

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