

Tin Can Sailors can run a two-track photo contest with parallel member and non-member categories, shared museum-ship themes, clear technical rules, and modest cash prizes plus membership incentives modeled on other naval and nonprofit contests.

Category structure (members vs. non-members)

Member-only categories (current TCS members).

- Life Aboard the Tin Can (Service & Daily Life)
Photos from time aboard destroyers or escorts: work, watches, mess decks, berthing, drills, and ceremonies that illustrate authentic life at sea.
- Shipmates
Portraits and candid images of crews, divisions, and reunion groups that emphasize camaraderie and generations of destroyer veterans.
- Museum Destroyer Volunteers in Action
Members working on, touring, or interpreting Tin Can Sailors–supported museum ships (KIDD, THE SULLIVANS, CASSIN YOUNG, JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, JR., etc.).

General Prize categories (open to all, including prospective members and non-members)

- Destroyers in the Public Eye
Photos of destroyers and escorts at fleet weeks, museum piers, air shows, harbor transits, and pier-side community events taken from public vantage points.
- Families, Homecomings, and Supporters
Homecomings, farewells, family days, Blue Star/Gold Star events, and community support scenes tied to destroyer / escort service.
- Destroyer Museum Visitors & Experiences
Non-members' perspectives aboard supported museum ships—tours, youth groups, scouts, field days, and dockside events that show how these ships educate and inspire.

Contest rules

- Eligibility
 - Member track: Open to current Tin Can Sailors members in good standing as of the entry deadline except board members and employees of Tin Can Sailors.
 - General Prize track: Open to members and all non-members, including active duty, reserve, retired, veterans, family members, and the general public.
- Entry limits and format
 - Up to 5 photos per person total, across all categories.
 - Digital only; JPG/JPEG files, minimum 300 dpi and at least 100 KB, maximum 15 MB per file.

- Basic editing (cropping, slight color and exposure correction) allowed; no heavy manipulation, composites, or added elements.
- No watermarks, dates, logos, or text on the images.
- Originality and rights
 - Entrant must be the photographer and retain copyright; by entering, they grant Tin Can Sailors a non-exclusive license to use winning and selected images in the magazine, website, social media, and membership materials with credit.
 - Historical images taken by the entrant during service are allowed; historical photos taken by someone else are not eligible.
- Timing and submission
 - Contest window: Opens April 30 and closes August 31, with winners announced in a Fall Tin Can Sailor issue and on the website / social channels.
 - Online submission form on destroyers.org requiring: name, contact info, category, member vs. non-member designation, ship/location, date, and a short caption.
 - Optional field at upload: “Are you interested in learning more about membership?” with a checkbox that allows follow-up.
- Judging
 - Panel of 3–5 judges: mix of destroyer veterans, a museum-ship representative, and one or two photography-savvy volunteers.
 - Criteria: relevance to theme, storytelling, composition, technical quality, and emotional impact, similar to criteria used by other maritime contests.
 - Blind judging where possible (images viewed without entrant names) for fairness.

Prize levels and membership incentives

- Overall awards (each track)
 - 1st Place (Best in Show – Member): \$300 + complimentary 1-year membership extension, with photos featured in Tin Can Sailor magazine and online.
 - 2nd Place (Member): \$150 + complimentary 1-year membership extension and recognition in TCS magazine and online.
 - 3rd Place (Member): \$75 + complimentary 1-year membership extension and recognition in TCS magazine and online.

 - 1st Place (Best in Show – Non-Member): \$200 + complimentary 1-year Tin Can Sailors membership + feature in the magazine and online.
 - 2nd Place (Non-Member): \$100 + complimentary 1-year membership.
 - 3rd Place (Non-Member): \$50 + complimentary first-year membership.
- Category-level recognition

- Category winners (both tracks): certificate, web and social media spotlight, listing in Tin Can Sailor, and a small non-cash perk (e.g., TCS hat or challenge coin) if budget allows.
- Museum Destroyer Feature Award: A note to the featured ship's organization encouraging cross-promotion.

Using the contest as a membership-growth tool

Using the contest to gather contacts, offer membership as a prize, and tie event participation directly to joining. For us, some potential avenues:

- Built-in membership offers
 - Make “complimentary Tin Can Sailors membership” part of the non-member grand and secondary prizes, similar to how the Naval Institute includes membership alongside cash.
 - Offer a limited-time discount code (e.g., \$5–\$10 off first-year dues) to all non-member entrants after the contest closes, sent by email.
- Data capture and follow-up
 - Require email and optional mailing address for all entrants and clearly state that they will receive information about Tin Can Sailors and museum-ship programs.
 - Tag contest participants in your database for a tailored follow-up sequence:
 - “Thank you for entering” + link to winners.
 - Short “About Tin Can Sailors and the ships we support” email.
 - “Here’s a special membership offer for contest participants.”
- Cross-promotion with museum ships
 - Share contest info and later the winning images with each supported museum ship and ask them to promote the contest and TCS membership through their channels and onboard signage.
 - Where feasible, coordinate a small onboard display of winning photos at one or more museum ships to reinforce the connection between Tin Can Sailors, the contest, and the preservation work.