Rescue Regatta Success

MC Volunteer Rescue Squad fundraiser starts off with a puff, ends with a bang

by Tina Mennett

About six weeks before the second annual Rescue Regatta, the Deltaville-based fundraiser had lost its wind. Online registrations were elusive for the dinner, dancing and the race set for July 12 and 13. Despite social media posts, text blasts, color ads, fliers, newsletters and walking the docks, there was little interest.

Canceling this year’s regatta, benefitting the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS), would probably end the regatta for good.

So much time, effort, and funds had already been invested. The Deltaville Maritime Museum had donated one of the best venues possible. The Fishing Bay Yacht Club again agreed to host the race itself donating, officiating and logistical expertise, along with "Mr. Roberts," the committee boat.

Great talent had long been booked for the two evenings — The Michael Clark Band featuring Tracey Clark on vocals, and core band members of Ray Pittman and the Revival.

Dave Rockafellow agreed to return as master of ceremony. Two guest speakers were booked to open and close the regatta, Carolyn Norton Schmalenberger and Randy Crittenden, respectively.

The MCVRS Auxiliary and Smokin’ Joe Davenport had already planned the two nights of delicious dinners complete with neatly dressed serving and clean-up crews. There was a marvelous listing of 60 online auction items donated by so many local businesses. And of course, there were the sponsors, most notably Norton Yachts, Yazu Yachts, Stingray Harbour Yacht Club, and Deltaville Yachting Center, along with numerous other marinas and boatyards who made significant donations. "The worst," one organizer

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Flying its spinnaker, “Merriwether” (above) is chased by eventual overall winner “Afterthought” in the second annual Rescue Regatta to benefit the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad. Lindsey A. Jochets (below) placed the highest bid at the Rescue Regatta silent auction to fire a cannon on loan from the "Luna" of Colonial Seaport Foundation and John Collamore. Jochets pulls the trigger cord closing the regatta weekend with a bang. (Photos by Stephen Blue and Bob Waldrop)

Regatta ...

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said, “if we don’t break even it will be with our heads held high and a reputation for throwing Deltaville one heck of a party!" So, they vowed to go the distance at that late date with only five boats registered and next to no RSVPs.

Rising Tide But then, about four weeks from the start, organizers saw some ripples. The wind was building. A couple of boats registered, and we got a dinner reservation or two, then a few more. Actual puffs began to fill organizers' sails. And suddenly, they were on the last stretch.

By July 12 there were 30 sailboats registered — 19 cruising boats and 11 racers! Online ticket sales were about 90 for each evening with more anticipated to purchase tickets at the door.

While this was a race, it is also a community outreach event aimed at non-sailors for fundraising, and “fun raising." The Colonial Seaport Foundation’s Luna vessel was dockside at Safe Harbor Stingray Point for free tours all weekend, though rain dampened the attendance the Luna crew remained undaunted in the face of a little weather, vowing to return next year.

Smash hit Opening night on Friday, July 12, was a smash hit. With more than 100 attendees, Emcee Dave Rockafellow kept the evening rolling with the "best ever," cringeworthy pirate jokes. One went, “Why does it take pirates so long to learn the alphabet? Because they can spend years at C." Carolyn Norton Schmalenberger spoke eloquently about her many years of chairing the corporate fundraising for the Southern Chesapeake Leukemia Cup Regatta and tying that experience to the significance of community volunteerism and the importance of our Middlesex's emerging Rescue Regatta.

As always, the MCVRS Auxiliary served up delicious fried chicken and shrimp with sides and dessert. Their catering talents aside, the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad could not function without the auxiliary, who are described as the unsung heroes of the squad.

To cap the evening, The Michael Clark Band featuring Tracey Clark on vocals put on a fabulous show. They even included a special rendition of the Motown hit "Rescue Me" to accompany the serving of the signature regatta cocktail, “The Rescue Me."

Race day Saturday morning July 13 a total of 28 skippers showed up to race, even with unfavorable weather leading up to the weekend, including an utter deluge on Friday and little to no wind predicted for Saturday. Fortunately, there was wind and no rain. There were some looming and dramatic clouds that eventually dispersed, but not before photographers Bob Waldrop and Stephen Blue both captured stunning photographs of the boats in pursuit. See photos at Facebook.com/ MCVRS.Regatta.

Bob Waldrop was aboard a True North 34 donated as a spectator boat complete with skipper, Gordon Inge, by Deltaville Yachting Center.

Stephen Blue was aboard a Carolina skiff skippered by Martin Brent of Rappahannock Marine Surveys.

Awards

As for the regatta winners, Craig Wright on "Afterthought" came in first overall, Brad Miller on "Schiehallion" placed second overall, and Todd Blekicki on "Battle Rhythm" placed third overall. For more race results browse to https:// www. regattanetwork. com/ event/27901#_newsroom. Once there, go to "Race Results" for the final positions within each class.

With the race over, in addition to dinner and dancing, there was an auction to close, more lovable pirate jokes, awards to present, and reminders of what the Rescue Regatta is all about.

Smokin’ Joe Davenport delivered, serving up his specialty smoked pork with classic sides, once again, to more than 100 attendees. The dinner and dancing would have been more than worth the price of admission, but there was a bigger reason for folks to be there.

Community service Pinetop District Supervisor Randy Crittenden, the guest speaker, told the audience of his experience as an EMT and wondered aloud, “How many lives have been saved by members of the rescue squad?

How many citizens have had their wounds bandaged, pain relieved, fears calmed? How many hours of sleep, holidays and family events have been sacrificed, or injuries suffered by rescue squad members serving the community?" And then Crittenden answered, “What has been their reward?

Ask them. Not money. Not fame. Not special privileges.

No, seeing the good they have done is reward enough for these people."

Boom

With the finale nearing, the core members of Ray Pittman’s Revival Band kept the tunes rolling into the night as only Pittman can. Their music was only interrupted with another pirate joke and a stellar live auction event that included bids to fire off one of Luna's cannons. A hearty $110 bid, from Lindsey A. Jochets, won the right to pull the trigger cord.

“A blast”

So, with a strong finish - a blast one might say — the success of the second annual Rescue Regatta points to a third annual Rescue Regatta in 2025.

Contemporaneous feedback was excellent, according to organizers. Numerous guests let organizers know they want to return to sail, attend, and support this fledgling event. This is an important vehicle to raise much needed funds for and awareness of the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad. At the time of this writing, more than $20,000 was raised, before expenses. The expectation is that this year’s event will match or surpass last year’s revenue.

Volunteers “The only thing that makes an event like this successful is community involvement," said Josie Webster, who along with Tina Mennett, served as co-chairman of the Rescue Regatta committee. Said Webster, “Whether it is money, time, in-kind donations, word of mouth, the photographers, the press, it’s volunteers who give and ask for nothing in return.

It's a community." Webster is a member of Stingray Harbour Yacht Club, a Rescue Regatta sponsor.

In addition to Webster and Mennett, the other members of the Rescue Regatta Committee include, MCVRS President Lynn White, MCVRS Captain Ole Albert, MCVRS Vice President and Rescue Regatta Committee Treasurer Jim Brewer, MCVRS member Susannah Wine, Deltaville Maritime Museum Board member Joe Davenport, Fishing Bay Yacht Club member Mike Karn, and volunteer Cathy Davenport.

Join the fun It’s not too late to donate or to become a rescue squad volunteer. Many want to help one another and the community in which they live. Running with the rescue squad, however you chose to do it, is all of that and more.

Browse to https:// rescueregatta.life/donate/ to donate and https://www.mcvrs. life/ to join.

(Tina Mennett drives ambulances for the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad. She and Josie Webster served as co-chairmen for the second annual Rescue Regatta committee.)

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