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Photos by Paul Almany

The Rescue Regatta Debuts in Deltaville

Thirty-five race crews converged at the start of the inaugural Rescue Regatta to support Middlesex Volunteer Rescue Squad on August 19-20 in Deltaville, VA. The event was hosted by Fishing Bay Yacht Club (FBYC), Stingray Harbour Yacht Club (SHYC), and Safe Harbor Stingray Point.

Friday's fundraising event hosted by Safe Harbor Stingray Point and SHYC Club boasted nearly 200 in attendance. Midnight Coal Company played some great rock and roll, and Dave Rockafellow of SHYC emceed and kept the audience engaged. Kendall Webre of Norton Yacht Sales was seen behind the bar mixing up our new signature drink, the "Rescue Me" along with Dark 'n' Stormies.

When it came to racing on Saturday, Rick Klein, the principal race officer from FBYC, said 35 on the water "was a great number of boats, including 15 in the cruiser class."

Craig Wright of FBYC took first place on *Afterthought*. Klein admitted that the "wind Gods were not in our favor, but it was a testament to the rescue squad that the sailing community showed up with such support."

And support they did. The awards dinner was held at the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad station house. Dinner was lovingly served by the MCVRS Auxiliary, and as always, it was delicious and plentiful. Nearly 200 were in attendance. Items were auctioned, donations were made, and some very good times were had as Beth Justice and Lee Fenical of Justice Goldstar kept it real and soulful.

Apart from the dinners and the race, there were other numerous side stories to tell, not the least of which was how the community came together on such late notice. In May, the planning committee was still uncertain that our regatta was going to come together. But it did. After we lost our initial photographers, people such as Paul Almany of FBYC, Bob Waldrop, as well as Whitney Law from River Realm and her crew Meghan Hall and Mark Smithson with TB Marketing came out to shoot photographs with barely a day's notice.

Other things came together, with a day or two to spare: a big trailer to use as a stage from the Oyster Festival Committee and a big tent from the band RipTide. Old sails from Norton's hung in the ambulance bay as decorations and a functioning Opti Class sailboat to ice down all the beer. In addition to our signature sponsorship from Norton's Yacht Sales, so many stepped up to support us including the Urbanna and Deltaville Hometown IGA, the Moose Lodge, as well as numerous local businesses and individuals.

In some cases, registered skippers and their crew collectively donated. After listening to our testimonials on Friday evening a couple of members of Midnight Coal Company stepped forward to donate a portion of their fee back to the Squad. Beth Justice and Lee Fenical of Justice Goldstar essentially played for expenses.

As of this writing we exceeded our goal of $20,000 by several thousand, at least. We expect more than $.95 of every dollar will go directly to the Rescue Squad towards a new ambulance or to support the new Station House in Urbanna.

I heard from sailors and spectators alike that the chatter on the water was an emphatic, "Yes Rescue Regatta!" and "We'll be back next year!" Commodores of the two involved yacht clubs, Mark Wensell of FBYC and Lisa Wright of SHYC, seemed more than willing to be a part of the Rescue Regatta next year.

By every measure this was a huge success from the money we raised, to the interest and awareness we generated. The RR Planning Committee wants to keep our momentum going. The importance of our success must not be overshadowed by the exhilaration of crossing the finish line (several rescue squad members were in the race) or pulling off a multi-day event without a road map. The important thing is keeping our Rescue Squad doing what it does best. We might rest today, but we are already beginning to plan next year, including the hunt for 2024 sponsors.

And here is why it is so important that we stay focused: When most Middlesex County residents you know need to go to the doctor, they get in their car and go, or a family member takes them. But more residents in this County call 911 just to receive any type of medical care, regardless of the urgency, because being seen by the Rescue Squad or transported to the emergency room is their only option.

Stay tuned for information on the 2024 event. Visit fbyc.net for results on the events page.