

A Regatta to Remember

by Rebecca M. Alvin

Photos by Nancy Bloom

For eight years now, Provincetown has welcomed the Great Provincetown Schooner Regatta to town, complete with its slate of parties, schooner tours and cruises, and of course the big race from Gloucester to Ptown. As much as the Regatta embraces our rich history as a fishing village, it was only a matter of time before the big event would equally embrace our history as an artist colony (America's oldest continuous artist colony, in fact).

The event has grown and this year, its events have expanded to include cultural, historical, and ecological themes, while never taking away from the central mission - to celebrate the New England schooners of the past.

This year's Regatta Commodore Charlotte Walker explains, "we're integrating more of the community and we're defining our mission... more and more to speak about our marine culture and marine ecosystem."

Earlier in the year, the Regatta began that initiative, called "Sail Into the Arts," with an event held jointly with the Provincetown International Film Festival. The party, called Film and Sail, was a success for both, and they will continue that collaboration now with a screening of the film *The Lightkeepers* at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, September 8th at the Whalers Wharf Cinema. But that isn't the only cultural collaboration for the Regatta.

For the past few weeks, they have been collaborating on a silent "art boats" auction, which you can preview now through September 8th at the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies before the actual auction on Wednesday night at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. "These model boats were actually built by Provincetown High School students and donated to 20 local artists who have transformed them into art works," Walker explains, adding that the Regatta's motivation was to support marine architecture and boat-building into the future generations.

"The Boats will be transported to PAAM for a ticketed event on September 8th," Walker says, enthusiastically. "Chris McCarthy [of PAAM] and Jim Bakker [of the Pilgrim Monument] will walk participants through a show that highlights Provincetown's marine-inspired art work [from both museums' collections]."

The kickoff happens on September 3rd with a reception at the Provincetown Public Library, featuring a tour of their art works, called *Inside Our Walls*. "It's a collection of marine-inspired art you don't get the chance to see very often," Walker says.

Many of the Regatta events from years past continue, though, which is welcome news for the boating enthusiast. On September 4th, for example, the Rhodes 19 Fishermen's Series begins in Provincetown Harbor. This two-day event culminates in an award ceremony and crew cookout at Flyer's Boatyard Dock on the West End on September 5th. Then, on Tuesday, September 6th, the main event, the Fishermen's Cup schooner race starts out early in the morning from Gloucester, but you can catch the action live via the Internet in Provincetown, beginning at noon at The Squealing Pig, with a crew party to follow.

The racing doesn't end there, though. New this year is The Cape Cod Catboat Race for the MacMillan Cup, which happens next Thursday, September 9th, from 12 - 4 p.m. in

the Harbor. The grand Commodore's Reception & Awards Ceremony (by invitation only) is at the town library that evening, followed by a post-event reception at the Waterford Inn.

Friday and Saturday, Sept. 10 - 11, there are a great variety of programs open to the public, which will really demonstrate the Regatta's newly refined mission of incorporating various aspects of marine history and culture in Provincetown into their programming. There are tours of the schooners and catboats, talks on maritime history and the marine ecosystem of our area; the Coast Guard Station will hold an open house, which you can access via free water shuttle from MacMillan Pier; Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill holds its "Paint the Race" and "Paint the Race for Kids" events; there are crew parties; the Parade of Sail from 3 - 5 p.m. on Friday; and the Long Point Schooner & Yacht Race on Saturday, culminating in an awards ceremony for that race at the Surf Club at 6 p.m. that night.

Also, as in years past, the Schooner Regatta schedule includes the upcoming Swim for Life events, a program which raises much-needed funds for AIDS, women's health, and the Provincetown community. Those events kick off with the Celebration of Life concert at the UU Meeting House at 8 p.m. on Friday, September 10th. Then, the big event, featuring hundreds of volunteer swimmers swimming in the Harbor, while thousands look on from the beaches and piers, kicks off with registration from 8 - 10:30 a.m. and a Mermaid Brunch at the Boatslip, featuring music by Zoe Lewis at 11 a.m. After the last swimmer finishes (estimated around 1 p.m.), Swim for Life Awards are given out at the Boatslip.

"We're really bringing together the various aspects of our communities through their affinity with everything that is marine-oriented," Walker summarizes.

Indeed, the next week and a half features a unique set of events that stir the soul with reverence for the past and joy at our future here on this narrow spit of land in the Atlantic Ocean. The inspiration these waters have brought to thousands - perhaps millions - of writers, artists, fishermen, yacht racers, swimmers, and everyday folks who have passed through is truly immeasurable. And the Great Provincetown Schooner Regatta brings it all together in a spectacular event for all.

For complete schedule and full details on the Regatta and its numerous collaborative events, call 508.487.SAIL or visit www.provincetownschoonerrace.com. To find out more about the Swim for Life events or to register as a volunteer, call 508.487.1930 or visit www.swim4life.org.