

The Wind in Their Sails
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This year's 8th annual Atlantic Highlands Yacht Club Ms. Race featured nine boats with over 80 women participating in the all female event. The race again proved successful in raising money and awareness for the New Jersey based organization, *180 Turning Lives Around*. 180 is dedicated to helping victims of domestic and sexual abuse and violence.

Skippers and crew began the day with fingers crossed, hoping for an overnight storm to pass. By the morning captain's meeting, the women's wishes had been answered with the storm moving offshore, but leaving little wind in its wake. At the 2 PM scheduled start time for the race, the sky was blue, but wind was nonexistent. Even so, these women did not give up. With both the motivation to win and a knowledge of the amazing charity they were supporting, the nine boats stuck in until a race went off at 3:56 PM; a slight southerly breeze had finally arrived!

With breezes in the 4 to 5 knot range the race was underway. The light winds kept the front running boats fairly close to the upwind mark. On the downwind leg, the Beneteau 40.7 *Overlap* skippered by Donna Syers took the lead. Being first around the downwind mark proved beneficial to *Overlap*. Upon arrival of the trailing boats, the nonexistent wind left them adrift in the current attempting to round the mark. In front, and clear of the pack, the *Overlap* crew navigated through pockets of breeze and made it to the finish. At 5:17 PM, *Overlap* crossed the finish line, with the crew cheering their efforts. This win was particularly poignant for Ms. Syers as she had placed second in the race the previous two years. Donna is the mother of 4 daughters aged 8 to 14, all part of her crew along with 6 additional juniors, a college sailor, and 7 other women.

Donna's girls, excited about the win, were already talking about next year's race. Donna, proud of her entire team commented "when the crew signs up for the race, they don't know if it's going to be an exhilarating ride with 20 knots of breeze, a comfortable ride with 10-15 knots, or a drifter with 5 knots of breeze. Mother nature plays a big role in the Ms. Race".

By 6 PM, with diminished winds, no other boat had yet crossed the finish line. With several boats mere meters away, the combination of the current and the lack of wind proved too dangerous, the boats were drifting closer to each other than they were to the finish line. The race committee requested termination of the race for the safety of the remaining crews and boats. The wind may not have been in their sails literally, but it certainly was in their hearts!

Post race, everyone remained in high spirits, remembering that this was not only about winning. Racers, friends, family and spectators gathered at the AHYC for a post race awards party and dinner buffet with prizes, a charity raffle and auction, while dancing the night away with live DJ entertainment. Everyone focused, not on the lack of wind, but instead on the camaraderie of the day, and the good feelings knowing that no matter what the results of the race, the 180 organization still won, and that is really all that matters.

For more information about the Ms. Race visit ahyc.net/msrace.htm.