

The 2020 Ms. Race Stays the Course

BY LORI DRAZ | Photos courtesy of Pete Buoy

The 16th annual Ms. Race, held at the Atlantic Highlands Yacht Club (AHYC) on Aug. 22, was a tremendous success. This year's race theme was "Stay the Course," chosen to show the all-women sailing group's commitment to raising funds to support 180 Turning Lives Around which protects, advocates and supports victims of domestic violence and rape in the community. These services are more necessary than ever due to the spike in domestic violence during the quarantine.

In March, Ms. Race committee members wondered if they even could have a race, but they followed their theme to "Stay the Course," and though it was a little atypical, they had a most successful and exciting day on the water.

The event began on Friday evening with a Virtual Captain's Meeting that welcomed captains and their crews from 10 boats spanning three local yacht clubs and a new team of experienced sailors from New York. Elaine Haher, past AHYC Commodore, seasoned J24 race captain and three-time Ms. Race winner, shared her racing tips, along with the details of the race course and pursuit start times as for Saturday's race.

Race day was glorious on the majestic Sandy Hook Bay with no storms for the female sailors. Captain Nitzan Levy, founder of Sailors NYC, along with Ayme Sinclair, vice president of the National Women's Sailing Association, joined AHYC club member Janet Wurch to race on her family's new J109, Aviato. Dale Wolfield, trustee of the Hudson River Maritime Museum, was affectionately referred to as their "secret weapon" while racing on former commodore Paula Del Coro's Sabre 402.

Out on the water, 10 boats sailed up and down the start/finish line, in the light 6-knot breeze, awaiting the selection of the course for the day. Ms. Race Course 3, the shortest course at 5.45 nautical miles, was announced by the committee boat captain at 12:30 pm. The Pursuit Race started at exactly 1 pm with the sailboat Eduam crossing the start as the light downwind breeze died and boats cautiously and slowly limped across the start until a slight breeze picked up again. Eduam



Ms. Race winner, Karen Harris, with her crew on her J120 Cygni



was followed over the starting line by the nine other sailboats as friends, families and guests gathered on spectator boats shooting photos and cheering on the women with shouts of encouragement and praise.

The conditions on Course 3 had mostly light breezes with several challenging light to no wind conditions for most boats. But the variable conditions did not impact Karen Harris and her crew on her prized J120 named Cygni. Harris effortlessly sailed the light breeze course to win the race in a remarkable one hour, 45 minutes and 48 seconds. She was followed by expert racer Elaine Haher on her J24, A Good Hair Day. Third place went to Ms. Race Co-chair Eileen Campbell and crew on her C&C 33 CODA.

Race day ended with a Virtual Awards Ceremony. Commodore Jack Glass thanked the Ms. Race committee members for this featured AHYC club charity race. Lynn Lucarelli, director of development 180, and an emotional Anna Diaz-White, executive director 180, shared their heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported 180 Turning Lives Around, mentioning a special deep appreciation for being one of the few charity events to be held during these unprecedented times.

Ms. Race supporters raised more than \$15,000 for this year's event, totaling more than \$170,000 for the 16 years the event has been held. Campbell said, "I am amazed that during this difficult year, the 2020 Ms. Race campaign was everything I hoped it would be. We tried new virtual events, were successful with fundraising and had a good turnout for the regatta. I'm so happy that sailors outside of our area came to race the event. We met wonderful women who promised to come back next year. Everyone adapted to the new protocols and worked hard to get things done."

For additional information on the Ms. Race, visit AHYC.net and [Facebook.com/MsRaceAHYC](https://www.facebook.com/MsRaceAHYC).

To see more photos, visit TheJournalNJ.com.



Ms. Race Co-Chairs, Diane Kropfl and Eileen Campbell