

Women on the Wind – Alyssa’s Story
By Alyssa Pepsny



Photo by Thomas Gardner

Summer sun, a warm August breeze blowing across the Sandy Hook Bay and nine racing sailboats with all female captain and crew ready to challenge each other to sail their fastest and best. This year’s theme is *Women on the Wind*. Women sailors share their love of racing sailboats, breeze, and teamwork. *Women on the Wind* are racing to bring awareness and gain support for *180 Turning Lives Around*, a private, non-profit organization that is dedicated to putting an end to domestic and sexual violence in our communities. *180* provides a myriad of services to individuals and families. For the past twelve years, the Ms. Race has been held to show support and gain awareness for those who are affected by domestic and sexual violence.

The Ms. Race helps to build confidence in women sailors. Each year women are encouraged to participate in the race and step outside or expand their comfort zone. Some women have been hesitant to take the helm of their own boat, or trim a sail or call tactics. With gentle persuasion and an awesome camaraderie of friends these women have entered the race and proven to themselves that they can do it. My sister Lauren, 19, drove the 40’ racing sailboat in 2015, earning a second place!

My family and friends have been racing together in the Ms. Race for many years on Overlap a Beneteau 1st 40.7. During our first race over seven years ago, we were moveable ballast, running from side to side of the boat. We were all so young and light; individually our weight was insignificant to the 40’ boat but as a team we were able to heal the boat over for more speed and point. We learned the importance of teamwork at a very young age.

Each year we learn a different life lesson from “anything is possible” to “sailing is both skill and luck” to “many hands make the job easier”. My sister Brianna, 13, says it best for last year’s life lesson. “Before you go racing off at a million miles an hour make sure you know where you are going.” Last year, our team on Overlap sailed the very fast 40’ raceboat faster and better than we have ever sailed her before as a team. Unfortunately, our team read the wrong course, and went speeding off in the wrong direction off course. It is an important life lesson I don’t think any of us will forget.

The women racers have a lot of support from other club members, husbands, significant others and family. The supporters help set up the races and run the committee boat and offer a pre-race safety seminar over breakfast. During the race pictures have been taken by plane, drone and from other sailboats. The race through pictures is well documented! It is a very special day, first or last, for *Women On the Wind*!