

RESTORING OCEAN HEALTH



Sailors for the Sea

BY ANDREA E. MCHUGH

For Rhode Island sailors and landlubbers alike, there's a pride in Narragansett Bay. New England's largest estuary covers 147 square miles, boasts a volume of 706 billion gallons and accounts for 256 miles of shoreline. Perhaps most importantly, Narragansett Bay is cleaner than it has been in more than 150 years, thanks to a nearly two-decade long public-private effort to reverse the effects of centuries of toxic pollutants. The remarkable transformation was used as a model at the 2016 World Oceans Day Summit, entitled "Lessons from Narragansett Bay to the Global Ocean," hosted in Newport with support from locally-headquartered nonprofit, Sailors for the Sea.

Founded by director and former chairman of Rockefeller & Co., Inc., David Rockefeller, Jr. and David Treadway, Ph.D., a nationally recognized therapist and author, Sailors for the Sea was created in 2005 to engage, educate and activate the sailing and boating community toward restoring ocean health. The lifelong friends are not only accomplished in their careers, but as longtime sailors. Rockefeller, Jr. has a long history of organizing sailing excursions in the U.S. and abroad, while Treadway has crossed the Atlantic three times, including one solo voyage, and has spent three decades sailing his Luders 33 far and wide. Together, the two rounded legendary Cape Horn aboard the 64-foot steel cutter *S/V Ocean Watch* to raise awareness about conservation and global state of the world's oceans. In early 2015, Shelley Brown joined Sailors for the Sea as the education director and was appointed director in 2019. With a Ph.D. in molecular biology from the University of Rhode Island, Brown says the position seamlessly bridges her science and marine expertise with her desire to bring ocean stewardship to the public.



TOP RIGHT: The Camden Classics Cup in Camden, Maine was one of many Sailors for the Sea Clean Regattas in 2019. PHOTO: MARK KRASNOW

CENTER: Engaging the next generation, Sailors for the Sea offers environmental lesson plans for all ages at sailorsforthesea.org/programs/kelp. PHOTO: SIMON HAJDUCKI/UNSPASH

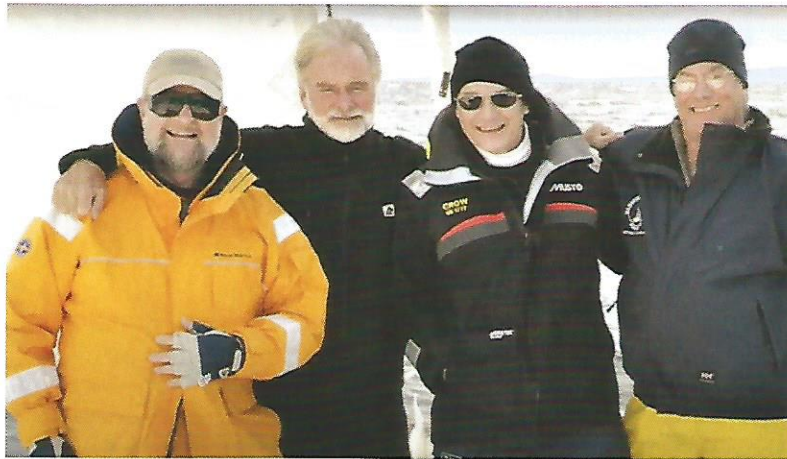
BOTTOM: Plastic is the leading cause of marine pollution. PHOTO: BRIAN YURASITS/UNSPASH

WITH HOPE ON THE HORIZON



PHOTO: ONNE VAN DER WAL

As anyone who spends time on the water or walking shorelines around the world can tell you, trash and debris present a critical threat to our oceans and endangers not only sea life, but all life. While anything that doesn't biodegrade is detrimental, plastic is the leading cause of marine pollution, singlehandedly wreaking havoc on the marine ecosystem. Sailors for the Sea estimates eight million metric tons of plastic enters the ocean each year—for perspective, that's enough to cover every coastline on earth.



LEFT TO RIGHT: David Rockefeller, Jr., Captain Mark Schrader, David Treadway, and the late Dr. Ned Cabot on the bow of *Ocean Watch* as they round Cape Horn.
PHOTO: DAVID THORESON

One of the first programs the organization launched to combat the gross misuse of our oceans was Clean Regattas, a sustainability certification for all on-the-water, near-the-water and water-loving events. The program's toolkit outlines best practices organizers can implement to make meaningful changes throughout their event for minimal environmental impact. Since its inception, the program has reached more than 660,000 sailors and attendees in over 40 countries.

To engage the next generation, Sailors for the Sea created KELP (Kids Environmental Lesson Plans) in 2013. These free, downloadable lesson plans address ocean health issues including plastic pollution, overfishing and climate change, and were prepared with the support of leading marine research and education institutions. These include the New Bedford Whaling Museum; Sea Education Association (SEA) at Woods Hole, the New England Aquarium and the R.J. Dunlap Marine Conservation Program at the University of Miami.

Brown says Sailors for the Sea's fundamental programs function as key outreach opportunities and mobilize their audience. "We always have people come up to us at events and tell us what they've seen while out on the water, and it's great they want to do something about it," she says. "They ask, 'What can we do to solve this?'"

The organization's Green Boating Initiative unites ocean enthusiasts by encouraging them to take action on campaigns to

reduce or eliminate plastics, and to, for example, work to help protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale. Another component of the initiative is the Green Boaters Guide, a free, downloadable guide of environmentally friendly practices and recommendations to reduce negative impact on the sea and promote ocean health. Some of these include using metal-free bottom paint and non-toxic cleaners, reducing extra weight on your boat

to maximize fuel efficiency and eliminating single use plastics like cutlery and drinkware (which should be repeated on land too). To connect the likeminded, the organization created a Green Boaters Facebook group where the nearly 15,000 members can discuss how to tackle sustainability challenges, including making sailing or other water-based activities as clean as possible.

But the organization's most progressive advancement made in the organization's history, came in early 2018, when Sailors for the Sea joined forces with Oceana, the world's most influential organization focused solely on oceans. While their missions were parallel, Oceana is dedicated "to achieving measurable change by conducting specific, science-based policy campaigns with fixed deadlines and articulated goals."

"This is an expansion of what we can do," explains Brown. "As an advocacy organization, they seek to change policy...we can activate our sailors and boaters on a new level. We're getting them to sign petitions to make a difference and be voices for topics important to them."

Ultimately, Brown sees Sailors for the Sea has the opportunity to make a difference both in our oceans and in people, by changing habits and turning their on-the-water community into activists raising awareness about the threat to our oceans. Boaters and sailors, she says, can be great advocates for the ocean and work together to win the sustainability and longevity of ocean health. ★

To become a Green Boater or learn more about Sailors for the Sea, visit sailorsforthesea.org.