

2010 Safety-at-Sea Seminar Raritan Yacht Club

by Kelly Robinson

On Friday July 30th, sixteen junior sailors of ages from fourteen to eighteen attended the Junior Safety-at-Sea Seminar hosted by Raritan Yacht Club in Perth Amboy. The Junior Safety-at-Sea program has been developed and is run by members of the Storm Trysail Club. Since its inception in 1996, the program has trained more than 3,800 juniors. The Raritan program is one of four programs in the country—the others being in Larchmont, Annapolis, and Newport. The juniors attending this year's RYC program represented five New Jersey Yacht Clubs (Raritan, Richmond County, Shrewsbury, Monmouth, and Friends of Belmar Harbor). In a series of morning classroom sessions, attendees received instruction on storm preparation, crew overboard avoidance and recovery, and electronics and navigation. Instructors included Rich du Moulin, Bob Behringer, and Kelly Robinson, respectively.

After the classroom sessions, the group assembled on the dock where Joe Richter of Sea Safety International, Inc. introduced students to safety hardware such as the Man Overboard Module (MOM) unit, flares and an inflatable life raft (including the contents and care of the raft and how to abandon ship safely). The demonstration was extremely hands-on with several of the participants helping to deploy the MOM unit and life raft. One of the kids also went into the water to show the activation of an inflatable life vest and how to enter the raft. Other participants were able to light off flares under adult supervision.

During lunch, RYC Commodore Ann Myer gave a presentation on medical matters including hypothermia, sea sickness, and hydration. After lunch, participants reassembled on the dock, where they were shown the use of a safety harness and jacklines as well as how to start an engine. Several of the kids also participated in a demonstration of how to reef a mainsail.

After the reefing demonstration, the participants were assigned to three boats for on-the-water practice. The boats used included: two-time Bermuda Race Winner, *Sinn Fein* (a Cal 40); the Olson 911s, *Poppy*; and the S-2 9.1, *Magic*. On-the-water activities started with participants being shown the location and use of key safety gear, including the location of thru-hulls. Most of the day was then spent practicing quick-stop crew overboard recoveries (both upwind and downwind with a spinnaker), reefing, and other maneuvers.

After putting the boats away, the program wrapped up with snacks at RYC and a raffle of several really nice PFDs donated by the Jamie Boeckel Foundation. Jamie Boeckel was a sailor lost off of *Blue Yankee* while racing on Long Island Sound in 2002. The Foundation that bears his name works to support safety training and college scholarships for young sailors.

Most of the juniors attending this year's program had little or no big boat experience and few had ever used a spinnaker. By the end of the day, they were setting, dousing, gybing, and stopping the boat under spinnaker with proficiency. Approximately one-quarter of the participants had attended last year's program. As last year, the cost of the program to juniors was reduced significantly by a generous contribution from PHRF Mid-Atlantic. While the Raritan seminar

remains small, it had a few more kids than last year, and involved several new clubs. We are looking into new ways to expand participation—several of which include increasing the opportunities for juniors to race in big boat races such as the NJORC events or distance races sponsored by New Jersey-based clubs. We will also be holding informational sessions and meetings with junior programs throughout the off-season to recruit new kids for next year.

Additional thanks for helping to make this year's event a success go out to all of the contributors mentioned above as well: Marcy Trenholm of the Storm Trysail Foundation (who provided countless hours of support and coordinated the Storm Trysail Foundation's generous contributions of t-shirts and owners' gifts); Jeff Jacobi of NJYRA (who served as a liaison with NJYRA and helped out as an on-the-water coach); Bayberry (which catered the lunch); Tod Marder (who helped on the water); and Pete Rebovich and Ann and Gary Myer (for allowing us to use their boats).