

2011 Safety-at-Sea Seminar Raritan Yacht Club

by Kelly Robinson

On Friday July 29th, seventeen participants between the ages of thirteen and twenty attended the Junior Safety-at-Sea Seminar hosted by Raritan Yacht Club in Perth Amboy. The juniors attending this year's RYC program represented four New Jersey Yacht Clubs (Raritan, Richmond County, Keyport and Shrewsbury). In a series of morning classroom sessions, attendees received instruction on storm preparation, crew overboard avoidance and recovery, and crew organization. Instructors included Storm Trysail members Rich du Moulin, Bob Behringer, and Kelly Robinson, respectively.

After the classroom sessions, the group assembled on the dock where STC member Ann Myer and Joe Richter (of Sea Safety International, Inc.) taught students how to use safety equipment such as jacklines, throw-ropes, and to deploy a Man Overboard Module (MOM). The session also allowed several groups of juniors to practice reefing and unreefing a mainsail.

When done there, the group reassembled in the RYC boat yard and received a briefing from Perth Amboy firefighters regarding common boat fires, prevention practices, and fire suppression. The PAFD then lit off a diesel fire and let the participants try putting out the fire with various types of extinguishers.

After lunch the group went for on-the-water practice of the skills they had learned. 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. Back at the mooring, the participants tried several methods to bring a person back aboard, allowing a few lucky souls to cool off in the water from the 95-degree heat.

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.

Most of the juniors attending this year's program had little or no big boat experience. By the end of the day, they were setting, dousing, gybing, and stopping the boat under spinnaker with proficiency. Approximately one-half of the participants had attended last year's program. While the Raritan seminar remains small, it had a few more kids than last year, and involved one new club. We continue to explore ways to expand participation, are now active on Facebook, and will be giving trophies for junior participation in RYC's Fall Lighthouse Race (a 25-miler) to be held in October. We are also considering activities for younger kids that could be used to introduce them to big boats before the normal SAS ages, acting as a feeder program.

Additional thanks for helping to make this year's event a success go out to all of the contributors mentioned above as well: members of the Perth Amboy fire Department, 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); Carol Woller and Chef Mitch for feeding everyone; Teri Lusty for helping on registration; and, of course, the boat owners.