

News Release

Contact: Julie Phillips-Turner
Phone: 410-490-0033
E-mail: jbpturner@aol.com



Nation's Largest Sailing Regatta – Hospice Cup – Celebrates Founder and Volunteers During 25th Anniversary

All successful fundraising events have these ingredients: dedicated volunteers, big donors, and a good cause. We're all familiar with the black tie dinners or the sporting event but we're not always familiar with how they get started and why they continue to succeed. Like most Americans, we just want to help our neighbors.

For one Vienna, Virginia woman who initiated a small sailing race on the Chesapeake Bay twenty-five years ago to raise money for a local hospice chapter in northern Virginia that had helped her family, it was a spark that initiated a nationwide fire.

“An idea for a fundraiser doesn't become ‘visionary’ overnight,” states Brown, “it takes the perspective of time, of seeing the idea attract others who strengthen it by perpetuating it—when you're developing an idea you're so busy with the work at hand that you don't have the luxury of perspective.”

Like most volunteers for hospice, Virginia Brown's family had a personal experience caring for someone at home. Her first husband died at home in 1979, as hospice in the United States was just getting started growing in late 1970's.

Shortly after, Brown was introduced to Dr. Josephina Magno—a medical oncologist from England who was instrumental in encouraging communities in the U.S. to think about providing hospice care—who encouraged Brown to volunteer for a local hospice.

Shortly after meeting with Magno, Brown received a call from the volunteer development director of the newly founded Hospice of Northern Virginia who asked her to chair a special event for their hospice. We discovered that several of us had been thinking about helping hospice. It was as though we'd been individually charged with positive thoughts, swirling around in our separate orbits, like atoms, waiting for the spark that would fuse us and our ideas together. That phone call was the spark.

Within a week Brown helped the hospice to put together a nucleus of volunteers to create a new event. Brown states, “We wanted to do something outdoors that could involve families. So, we decided to have a sailing race followed by an awards party at

a private home. None of us knew much about sailing but we were introduced to someone who turned out to be a famous race sailor named Al Van Metre.”

This first sailing race event took place in the fall of 1982. The proposed race appealed to a lot of local skippers and the fleet was fairly large. The sight of those boats, perfectly handled in brisk winds for a 22 mile race from the Severn River near Annapolis to the Miles River in St. Michaels, had a beauty which has remained in the memory of those who were lucky enough to be present.

Twenty five years later this race has expanded to many that are held annually around the United States from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida to San Francisco, California. Brown has acted as the race ambassador helping each location set up their own regattas. Al and his wife Joan Van Metre remain the annual Honorary Chairs of the Chesapeake Bay-based Hospice Cup event.

The sailors who have raced in the hospice regattas over the last twenty-five years range from international professionals to local champions and even the casual “just for fun” racers. However, all have a special place in their hearts for the hospice regattas.

Perhaps it is because hospice care and sailing have a lot in common. Going out on a sailboat can be hazardous. A successful skipper and crew must be resourceful, have absolute trust in each other. These are similarities which Brown finds between race crews and team of hospice caregivers.

Brown states, “You have confidence and ability and trust that you will come back safely—same type of very strong bond that we witness with team of caregivers in hospice care—they’re not venturing their lives on the water but they’re certainly venturing the lives or the quality of life of the people they’re caring for—the patient, the family and friends, all the people in that circle of caring. You have to have a certain fearlessness, it’s just part of the strength of the bond, though not discussed, you just know that its there and you can count on it.

“We’ve been lucky that time and the work of hundreds of volunteers around the country who have taken up this concept of ‘sailing for others’ has validated the impact of the original idea, states Brown.

When Brown and the other volunteers realized that the success of the first race in 1982 had inspired others around the country to hold similar events, using the original format, the National Hospice Regatta Alliance—the first nationwide group of volunteers raising money and community awareness for a specific charity was formed. The regatta members of the Alliance, through hard work and economy of costs, raised 1.6 million dollars in net revenue for 2005. However, over the past 24 years the Chesapeake Bay-based Hospice Cup, has raised over \$7 million to support hospices around the Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC area hospices.

In April 2006, Brown was recognized by the National Hospice Foundation as an individual who demonstrates Philanthropic Inspiration by motivating others by

example. Recipient of the award have a special passion and unparalleled commitment which has helped engender a lasting culture of philanthropy. Brown was honored by the Foundation along with other leaders, including Bishop Desmond Tutu, for Humanitarian Leadership

“To me, these races epitomize the energy of life at its best,” states Brown, “watching the crews work together, the excitement before a race and lively discussions afterward—a race crew has many of the same qualities that a team of hospice caregivers has—resourcefulness, courage, and absolute trust in each other and their common goal.”

The 2006 participating hospices which include: Hospice of the Chesapeake, Capital Hospice, Montgomery Hospice, Calvert Hospice, Hospice of St. Mary’s and Community Hospices, must meet the standards of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. Hospice Cup, Inc. is a proud member of the National Hospice Regatta Alliance, www.hospiceregattas.org.

The Hospice Cup is sanctioned by the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Racing Association (CBYRA) and counts for CBYRA season-long High Point competition. Hospice Cup, Inc. is a non-profit, all volunteer organization, chartered under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia for the purposes of conducting a benefit yacht race and related events. Administrative and operational activities connected with the event are carried out entirely by volunteers. Net proceeds are disbursed to the participating hospices on a pro-rated basis.

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