

## Chairwoman's Report for Women On Water 2013-2014

After a pre-season gathering early in October the 2013-14 WOW season got off to a scary start on Halloween night in gusty conditions which saw half the fleet opt out preferring to talk the talk in the Clubhouse. Races 3 & 5 were also held in strong breezes with all other races enjoying light to very light winds but it was the low tides that caused the most havoc. In Race 3 a first time WOW boat, 'Alvarado', found ground well out of reach of help so had to call the Coastguard for a rescue. Race 5...22-28kts and a dead low King tide, and 'Whatever' cut too close to the bulge just after the start and found herself wind-driven hard aground but after several attempts managed a spectacular pirouette before continuing on her way. Our stiff tidal streams together with failing breezes saw many of us struggling to round marks or even finish several of the races...Race 4 saw 'Whatever' sail to within 1 metre of the finish line when the breeze just stopped and she was sucked away, just managing to creep back some 14 minutes later.

Finally, following last year's program, we finished with a Sunday long race in sunny, light conditions on an outgoing tide so we headed out the harbour entrance to A Beacon. Some cruising division boats preferred to raft up at Pane Pane to enjoy the 27 degree sunshine with a few wines, rums and nibbles... a sensible choice, it turned out, as the rest of us tried fruitlessly to punch through the opposing current in the Entrance. We experienced lack of steerage & sailing backwards in close proximity to each other which ended in a protest from 'Smudge' on 'Whatever' resulting in their unnecessary withdrawal and overall drop from first place to third...a hard pill to swallow. The final results for the season were Heluva Hurry 1<sup>st</sup>, Freedom Express 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Whatever 3<sup>rd</sup>. All in all it was another successful WOW season as no races were cancelled or abandoned. Attendances were down due to having less big keel boats but competition was still keen between crews on the smaller keel boats & trailer yachts.

Our merchandise range this year included our new WOW shirt of cyan blue with gold screen printed logos as well as black polar fleece jackets. Wendy at the Canvas Locker generously made us 12 WOW monogrammed gear bags and Burnsco supplied us with Gill sailing gloves at a discounted price. We promoted WOW with a great flyer at the Boat Show and in the Sport BOP Play in the Bay directory and November Water Month as we did last year. To further educate our members we held an education evening showing the Penny Whiting Learn to Sail video followed up by tuition from Nicole Harris and myself which was well received.

As in previous years the BOP Trailer Yacht Squadron at Lake Rotoiti hosted a windward/leeward racing regatta for us on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 15 of us participated. We attempted two sessions of dinghy sailing but strong winds meant only one session on March 13<sup>th</sup> was possible and 17 members participated in similar light conditions to last year.

The highlight of this year would have to be the commitment of Rhonda Ritchie, owner of the Farr 9.2m keeler 'Smudge', to put a WOW team together to compete in the annual Auckland to Tauranga Race on 17<sup>th</sup> April. Over the course of this WOW season Rhonda and her crew of Aimee (daughter), Jackie Holt, Leslie Goddard, Delwyn Hodgson, and Laura Vonk sailed at every opportunity. Rhonda worked hard to get the boat up to Category 3 certification while trying to find sponsorship to help pay for the mission. It was agreed that \$1000 of WOW funds would be given towards this most historical event for WOW as it was the very first time an all-female team had ever attempted to do

the race. In addition, the Smudge team was also given money from Women's Yacht Racing New Zealand (WYRNZ) charitable trust which was set up to promote and support women's racing in NZ. In preparation the 'Smudge' team succeeded in completing the 65nm Tauranga to Whitianga Race back in January but unfortunately when 17<sup>th</sup> April came the weather turned nasty on race day and even after a delayed start time of 4pm the rough seas saw many boats withdraw including 'Smudge'. All was not lost, however, and after some rest and recovery from sea sickness they continued sailing at 5am next morning and completed the trip still in rough & windy conditions arriving Saturday morning so they felt they'd succeeded in their mission. Somewhat disappointed but not defeated Rhonda is now determined to have another go next year and I'm sure WOW will support her again when the time comes

In summary, it has been another great sailing season for the women of the Bay and an historical year for women's sailing in NZ with one successful all-female team on 'Strider', skippered by Ashley Rogers, competing in the Coastal Classic Race to Russell, Bay of Islands. Unfortunately, the light conditions prevented them from finishing within the time limit. Another all-female team was put together with the help of Lisa Lewis of WYRNZ but it dissolved when the skipper, Cherry McIvor, withdrew due to work commitments. Thanks must be given to Lisa Lewis for all her encouragement and enthusiasm to get more women into long distance yacht racing and I hope those of us out there that aspire to great achievements in sailing are encouraged by these small beginnings and will keep the momentum going.

I know Women On Water is a great way for women to start sailing but there's so much more to learn. Some are happy just for a night out on the water while others want to learn more and the WOW program caters for both types. We are a very successful division of TYPBC and the envy of many clubs in the country so let's keep it going for many more years to come.



I wish the new committee and especially the new Chairwoman of WOW every success in the future and hope to join many of you on a yacht someday soon.

From your retiring chairwoman,

Megan Harris