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PROVINCETOWN SWIM FOR LIFE & PADDLER FLOTILLA SEPT 11

Kayakers key to Swim for Life safety

Dozens of kayakers, hundreds of swimmers and numerous volunteers are buzzing with adrenaline as I approach Long Point with my red lamay flag, atop a found highflyer buoy. Transporting all these eager swimmers to the Swim for Life starting line in an hour and a half is no easy task, now their safety in the water gets my full attention.

After the kayaks gather to form the Paddler Flotilla and the Wellesley girls swim team gives a warm-up cheer, I walk along the water line, flag held high, barking encouragement through my megaphone. The crowd is psyched. At the edge of this mass of human energy I raise my flag and megaphone, "On your mark, get set, go!"

A frenzy of bodies hits the water, splashing, an emotional release of excitement erupts as human sounds fade, replaced by the power of arms and legs propelling swimmers into the harbor. The bright lime green swim caps, along with colorful kayaks, become a sea of stars in the water, with the skyline of Provincetown as a backdrop. This is my favorite moment of the event.

The kayakers are the key to swimmer safety, being closest to them and able to maneuver near them without the sounds and fumes of motorboats. They make direct contact with the swimmers and are on the alert for those who may need water, rest or encouragement. They are backed up by a number of safety boats, including the US Coast Guard and the harbormaster. On shore at the Boatslip beach, along with the crowd cheering the swimmers on, are the Rescue Squad and the Swim for Life medical team. Hot tea, blankets and a warm hug greet the swimmers. The few with hyperthermia are sent to hot showers inside.

The throng at the Boatslip beach waits in vigil, applauding until the last swimmer and kayaker touch the beach. The colorful prayer ribbons flutter in the breeze overhead, witnessing a moment of triumph for all.

The 23rd Annual Provincetown Swim for Life & Paddler Flotilla will be held at the Boatslip Resort, 161 Commercial Street, and includes the Mermaid Brunch, entertainment by Zoe Lewis and the awards ceremony. The Celebration of Life Concert will be held at the Meeting House on Friday evening, produced by John Thomas. Local community radio station WOMR 92.1 FM (www.womr.org) will once again broadcast the event live and online from the Boatslip Resort and from the starting line at Long Point.

Swimmer, boater and kayak registration is from 8:30-10:00am at the Boatslip. The Swim begins at Long Point at 10:30am, and the public is invited to greet the swimmers around 11:00am. All events are free and open to the public including the Mermaid Brunch,

which begins at noon. The awards ceremony will be held on the deck shortly after the last swimmer arrives on shore, approximately 1:00pm.

The Swim for Life benefits: AIDS Support Group of Cape Cod, Helping Our Women, Outer Cape Health Services, Provincetown Rescue Squad, Lower Cape Ambulance, Soup Kitchen in Provincetown and the Academy at Provincetown High School. Business sponsors for 2010 to date include: Provincetown Banner, Paul Mitchell, Boatslip Resort, Far Land Provisions, White Porch Inn, Seamen's Bank, Lobster Pot Restaurant and Fanizzi's Restaurant. The event is also sponsored in part by the Provincetown Tourism Fund.

The 2010 Swim t-shirt by Varujan Boghosian (100% organic cotton) is available for sale at downtown Seamen's Bank, Venture Athletics and the Pilgrim Monument. For registration forms for swimmers, paddlers, security boaters, volunteers and sponsorship opportunities, or to make a donation, contact: Swim for Life, P.O. Box 819, Provincetown, MA 02657, 508-487-1930, email, thecomact@comcast.net, and at its website, www.swim4life.org.

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