

Provincetown Banner July 13, 2009

Artist completes 'Unfinished Business' in Swim for Life

Provincetown artist Shirl Roccapiore, who created the t-shirt and poster design for this year's Swim for Life, set for September 12, had a memorable swim experience in 2001. During a 21-day trekking expedition in the Himalayas, Nepal, which required vigorous physical training, research and commitment, she developed cerebral edema 200 feet from the 18,500-foot summit, a potentially fatal situation whereby the brain swells and lack of oxygen causes severe physical symptoms. Sherpas and a helicopter transported her to safety and the hospital. It was a humbling experience.

"I 'didn't get to finish' and it stayed with me for years. I just couldn't shake the notion that I had failed in some way," she stated. The Swim for Life was my way of dealing with that episode. I needed to finish an event, and I did."

She recalls one point in the water when a man in a kayak asked her if she wanted to rest for a while. "He was like an angel," she exclaimed. "I never saw his eyes behind his sunglasses, but that red ball cap and his pleasant demeanor made for a very comforting and surreal experience. I hung on to that kayak, and with an emotional and shaky voice, I told him, 'I have to finish!' I just have to finish this swim". He paddled by her side to the finish line. "I'll never forget him, and how it felt to walk out of that water knowing I had completed the swim, ... I had finished ... and finally made peace with my self. The whole time in the water, I thought back to my time on that mountain, all the Sherpas who helped me... and this was for them!

Roccapiore's simple yet provocative design features the yellow-orange hook of Long Point, with the lighthouse, in an ethereal blue sea. Printed on 100% organic cotton, it is for sale at Seamen's Bank, Commercial Street, and Venture Athletics. In 2007 she co-produced the documentary, "ARTSPIRIT", about the artist experience in Provincetown, and is represented by Kobalt Gallery in town.

Celebrating its 22nd year, the annual Provincetown Harbor Swim for Life & Paddler Flotilla will welcome swimmers and kayakers from across the country on Saturday, September 12 for its weekend benefit for AIDS, women's health services and the community. The 2008 event raised \$160,000 from over 300 swimmers and kayakers. Beneficiaries include the 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 2009 to date include: Provincetown Banner, Paul Mitchell, Boatslip Resort, Far Land Provisions, White Porch Inn, Seamen's Bank and Fanizzi's Restaurant. The event is also sponsored in part by the Provincetown Tourism Fund.

This popular post-Labor Day celebration and quintessential community event will be held at the Boatslip Resort, 161 Commercial Street, and includes the Mermaid Brunch, entertainment and the awards ceremony. The Celebration of Life Concert will be held at the Meeting House on Friday evening. For the third year, local community radio station WOMR 92.1 FM (www.womr.org) will broadcast the event live and online from the Boatslip Resort and from the starting line at Long Point.

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.