

PORTSMOUTH PARTNERSHIP

Promoting economic growth, leadership and education within the City of Portsmouth

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SCHOONERS, SCHOOLKIDS AND SUNSHINE

8th graders from Portsmouth Schools tour *Liberty Clipper*

FROM OCTOBER 15 THRU 17, FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, Portsmouth's waterfront played host to the ships and sailors of the Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race with music, tours, re-enactors and the special events of the Schooner Days weekend. Memories of last year's drenching rains quickly faded as this year's sunshine lured both young and old to Olde Towne's seawall, museums, restaurants and shops. Cameras were ever-present, and poses with re-enactors and stately schooners were the order of the day.

THE GREAT CHESAPEAKE BAY SCHOONER RACE participants have, for 21 years, raced from Fells Point, Baltimore, to Thimble Shoals light. The event draws the largest gathering of schooners in the world, and provides its organizers the opportunity to pursue their mission of promoting public awareness of the Chesapeake Bay's maritime heritage and encouraging the ongoing improvement of the Bay's health. For Portsmouth's Olde Towne, however, the event provides an opportunity to welcome both visiting sailors and locals to its beautiful, historic waterfront.



Students return to the dock in a 30' open sailboat with oars in hand



The Elizabeth River Project's *LEARNING BARGE* hosted visitors

THE WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES were planned and executed by the energetic and resourceful volunteers of **PortsEvents**, the Portsmouth Partnership's newest affiliate created two years ago to help put "feet on the street" in the city's historic Olde Towne district. From events to signage, they had it covered. In Baltimore, schooner crews

received gift bags which included maps, plus news of the “Schooner Fare” and special “Sail-a-Thon” presented by Olde Towne’s restaurants and shops; in Hampton Roads, print, broadcast and digital media welcomed the participation of locals.

WHILE MUSICAL EVENTS bookended the celebration - **Roger Brown’s** hosted local musician Joe Maniscalco on Friday night, and the **Commodore Theatre** hosted the **Natchel Blues Network’s** International Blues Competition on Sunday – Saturday was devoted to engaging families and schoolkids with hands-on lessons regarding the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, 18th century maritime life, and more. North Landing hosted both the **Elizabeth River Project’s Learning Barge** and a representative of the **Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve**. High Street Landing saw demonstration tables courtesy of the **U.S. Navy**, the **U.S. Coast Guard** and the **Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum**, plus blacksmithing and wooden boat-building (top, left). One of the day’s most popular stops was the **Colonial Seaport Foundation’s** tent which featured re-enactors in 18th- century dress demonstrating rope-making, navigation and general information about life at sea to throngs of eager visitors (center, left).



IN KEEPING WITH PRIOR YEARS’ TRADITION, many schooners lowered their gangplanks to welcome 8th graders from **Portsmouth Public Schools**. This year, 90 eager students in bright blue t-shirts swarmed over the sailing craft, listening closely as crews described their ships, their individual responsibilities and their lives at sea. Opportunities to ask questions and to actually handle sails and lines added up to an unforgettable experience for the kids. One group was offered the opportunity to man the oars on a 30’ open boat powered only by sail . . . and oars (below, left)!

ACCORDING TO SHERRYE POLLARD, Science Chair at Waters Middle School, “. . . students had a wonderful experience. They were all excited when they came back to school on Monday and were telling everyone who did not go all about what they experienced.”

WHAT DID THE KIDS have to say?

“. . . everyone was real nice, and they taught us a lot about how schooners are made.”

“. . . it was the best field trip that I’ve been on.”

“. . . I got to learn how to pull up the sails, learned the difference between a boat and a schooner . . . and about the different tools that they used.”

“. . . I’d definitely like to go again.”



WATERS MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER Diisha Hicks summed it up well: “I was really impressed by our students’ behavior . . . I hope the students understood how teamwork and keeping up with responsibilities are important not just in school but with everything.”

PORTSEVENTS is the Portsmouth Partnership’s newest tool used to assist with Portsmouth’s economic development. Its specific focus is on historic Olde Towne, where the city has made significant investments in a hotel, a music venue, museums and more. The Partnership supports these investments and, judging by the energy and commitment shown by Olde Towne’s PortsEvents volunteers, so do the citizens of Olde Towne.



GPDC: 12 years 1,000 jobs \$12,000,000 tax revenue