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Providence Boat Show Presented by Washington Trust Sees Strong Sales, Increased Attendance
Show Organizers Successfully Capitalized on Easy, Affordable Pathways into Boating

February 7, 2017 – The Providence Boat Show presented by Washington Trust, which was held over the February 3-5 weekend, saw strong sales and increased attendance. Compressed this year from four to three days, the show drew a crowd that was 10 percent larger than last year’s attendance. Among the show-goers were boat buyers who used this Rhode Island expo to explore new pathways into boating and get a jump on the season by purchasing boats.

The Providence show, held inside the Rhode Island Convention Center, drew over 140 exhibitors who represented different ways to get involved in and enjoy boating. The fleet ranged from small paddle craft and inflatable and sailing dinghies to powerboats in the 20- to 30-foot range. The display was coupled with free seminars on sport fishing and seamanship, brokers representing listings of pre-owned boats, boating clubs, special sea-to-table events, an indoor pool, and premium learning opportunities such as a two-hour seminar for women who want to get more involved in the sport.

“One of our biggest challenges we face as an industry is getting new people involved in boating—and that is something the Providence show is perfectly suited for,” said Wendy Mackie, CEO of the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA), which owns and manages the show. “We focused on affordable ways to get out on the water in our marketing—and the success of that strategy proved that a small regional show like ours can be a strong marketing opportunity for the marine trades while also helping to cultivate new boaters.”

Stand-up paddleboard (SUP) demos in the show's indoor pool were a centerpiece of the show. According to Guy Gauvin of East Coast Paddle Sports, interest in SUPs was high and his company exceeded their sales targets, with 17 sales and some 8 more deals in play as the show closed. Gauvin noted that about half of those buyers were already boaters looking for a rigid or inflatable board to put on their boat, but the other half were people who were new to the sport making their first boating purchase.

Exhibitors who marketed to a more experienced, established boater also reported strong results at this year's show. For Al Elson of Striper Marina—who showcased models from Cobia, Key West, and Pursuit—his sales at the show represented a sharp increase, compared to last year's Providence show.

A strong opening on Friday for Jack Martone of Wood Boat & Motor, with two boat sales by late afternoon, proved to be the forecast for a successful show. Martone—who showcased models from Campion, Carolina Skiff and Clearwater—left the show with nine boat sales and multiple engine sales. “Our sales results this year were like the results we used to have ten years ago at this show,” said Martone.

Several other dealers reported a strong opening day that continued throughout the weekend for results that met or exceeded their sales targets, including Inland Marine, Lakeview Marine and Maritime Solutions. An informal survey of exhibitors at the show's closing revealed that nearly 90 watercraft (including paddle craft) were sold at the show, with many exhibitors leaving the event with promising leads for additional sales.

An Industry Breakfast was hosted by RIMTA on the opening morning of the boat show. A crowd of marine trades professionals packed into the event to see RIMTA award its John H. Chafee [Boater of the Year Award to Kate Wilson](#) (North Kingstown, R.I.), for the important grassroots work she has done in getting more Newport-area youth engaged in boating. Governor Gina Raimondo and R.I. Department of Labor & Training Director Scott Jensen also spoke at the event, which included a panel discussion and question-and-answer session on workforce challenges and solutions in the marine trades.

Sponsors of the Providence Boat Show that joined Presenting Sponsor Washington Trust included Brewer Yacht Yards & Marinas, Dockwa, Helly Hansen, and Kellogg Marine Supply.

For more details on the Providence Boat Show, visit providenceboatshow.com.