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Providence Boat Show Rides Wave of Increased Interest in Boat Ownership

Four-Day Show Features New Attractions, Expanded Seminars, Tie-In to Hollywood Film Debut

Providence (R.I.) January 12, 2016 —Just when more people are buying boats, the 23rd Annual Providence Boat Show presented by Washington Trust opens in early February to satisfy that rising interest—bringing with it an expansive fleet and a festival-like atmosphere celebrating all things boating. This year's show, one of the largest indoor boat shows in New England, revives its most popular features, but with a twist: an updated layout for easier navigation through boat and gear displays, new special-interest areas, an expanded seminar program, and even a tie-in to a recent Hollywood film debut.

According to the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), new-boats sales rose by 8.5 percent in 2014. Industry data reveals a 10.5% rise in 2015 third-quarter sales, compared to last year, particularly in the categories of power craft featured at the Providence show. That's good news for local industry coming to the boat show, but it also leaves buyers looking to purchase a boat for the coming season with a sense of urgency to make boat-buying decisions before other New Englanders do.

"The Providence Boat Show is a great place for boat buyers to talk to dealers and brokers and make their decisions early in the season—and now that we have expanded to four days, there is plenty of opportunity to get one-on-one time with an expert," says Wendy Mackie, CEO of the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA), which owns and manages the show. "But we cater to all kinds of boaters: those who simply want to fish from shore, or kayak, or charter a boat, or even those who have never stepped foot on a boat before. There is truly something for everyone."

The Providence Boat Show will be held at the Rhode Island Convention Center from Thursday, February 4 to Sunday, February 7. Support from Presenting Sponsor Washington Trust has helped organizers upgrade this four-day event to include the following highlights.

Islands of Activity: Row after row of boats and gear is not the rule at the Providence show; islands of activity have been built into a new layout so showgoers can pursue what interests them most. New this year is an indoor pool where all ages will have fun with model boats, as well as kayak and paddle-board demos with East Coast Paddle Sports. Fishing fans will flock to "Reel Island" to meet tournament-winning fishermen and try their hand at a professional-grade fishing simulator. Aspiring boat builders will watch students from Chariho Career & Technical Center and Warwick Area Career & Technical Center do a live boat build at the "Youth Boat Build," sponsored by Jamestown Distributors. Boaters hankering for some tropical R&R will learn all they need at "Island Time," a new area showcasing Caribbean destinations where showgoers can enter a drawing to win a week-long stay at the Bitter End Yacht Club in the British Virgin Islands. A special ArtSEA area will showcase the work of local artists inspired by the sea.

Hollywood Comes to Providence: On January 29, moviegoers will rush through theater doors to get their first glimpse at a riveting tale of heroism at sea in the Disney film, *The Finest Hours*. But only those who come to the Providence Boat Show on Sunday, February 7 will learn the true tale behind what is known as the Coast Guard's most daring rescue at sea. New England author Michael Tougias, who co-wrote the book on which the film is based, will tell the story behind the story in a rare author appearance. When Tougias uncovered records of a daring rescue that took place in February 1952 when a ferocious Nor'easter ripped two oil tankers in half off the coast of Cape Cod, he was lucky enough to get the story directly from the man at the center of the action, U.S. Coast Guardsman Bernie Webber, who passed away in 2009.

From Sea to Table: Sea-to-table demos with local chefs are a standing-room-only attraction returning to the show. Each chef will prepare a favorite dish using local sea food. Participating restaurants include Simone's (Warren), Simpatico Jamestown, Malt (Newport) and Blaze Village Kitchen (Pawtucket). Not only will showgoers get schooled in cuisine: they will also learn how to filet a large game fish.

Expansive Fleet and New Boats: A wide range of powerboats, sailing dinghies, personal watercraft, and paddle-powered craft will be on display, along with several new designs, including: the North Rip 30, a new boat designed in concert with tournament-winning fishermen and built in Rhode Island by US Watercraft; the RS Aero, a singlehanded sailing dinghy from Zim Sailing (Warren) that offers three different rig configurations for skippers ranging from a 77-pound youth to a 210-pound dinghy champion; three new Stingray powerboats at South Attleboro Marine that range 19 to 20 feet in length and feature speed, comfort, and plenty of seating for family and friends; the Sea Fox 206 Commander center console; and a new POP Inflatable Stand-Up Paddleboard from East Coast Paddle Sports (Wakefield & East Greenwich).

Boat Show U: Going to the Providence Boat Show is like attending a boating university—for free. Showgoers can learn from some of the most experienced captains and tournament-winning fishermen on the East Coast. Sport fishing seminars, sponsored by North Rip Boats, are organized by East Coast Charters (Warwick); boating seminars are organized by Confident Captain/Ocean Pros (Middletown) and the Annapolis School of Seamanship. There is even a session on "How to Become a Rhode Island Boater" with great advice on how to get started. Thanks to the R.I. Department of Environmental Management, showgoers can take an exam to earn their Certificate of Boating Safety Education during the show. A special Premium (paid) Seminar for "Women on the Water" takes place on Saturday, February 6.

Show organizers have incorporated new technology this year to attract younger and tech-savvy boaters. A large electronic Jumbotron will crown the center of the show, with rotating information and social media posts from all who use the hashtag #PBS2016. A new Providence Boat Show app, which has been designed to help showgoers get the most out of their visit to the show, will launch on January 22.

Sponsors joining Presenting Sponsor Washington Trust include Antigua & Barbuda Department of Tourism, Bitter End Yacht Club, North Rip Boats, *Coastal Angler Magazine*, Helly Hansen and Keel Vodka.

Hours are: Thursday, February 4 (3:00pm - 9:00pm), Friday, February 5 (12:00pm - 9:00pm), Saturday, February 6 (10:00am - 8:00pm), Sunday, February 7 (10:00am - 3:00pm). The show closes early Sunday to accommodate the Super Bowl. Adult one-day tickets are \$12; children 12 and under are free. Special multi-day and family ticket packages are available online.

For more details on the show, and to purchase tickets, visit www.providenceboatshow.com.