

Annual Poker Run raises funds for VIMS

By Erin Kelly

(October 12, 2012) The Colonial Sail & Power Squadron's third annual "Dinghy Poker Run" raised more than \$3,000 for the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

The event, held at Dare Marina in Yorktown in June, featured more than 100 participants—over 70 more than last year. Contenders paddled—by way of boat, dinghy, inner tube, kayak, or the floatation device of their choice—to designated locations along Chisman Creek, where they received 7 playing cards from which they chose their best 5-card hand.

Headquartered in Williamsburg, the Colonial Sail & Power Squadron is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting safe boating through education. Event organizer Bill Walsh is deeply involved in the squadron and has been the man behind the Poker Run since its inauguration in 2010. "This year's event was a huge success and I hope to continue to get the word out there and raise as much money as we can for VIMS," he says.

The event boasted a number of sponsors including Dare Marina, KITCO Fiber Optics, West Marine, West Marine Express, Joe & Mimma's Restaurant, the IHOP in Yorktown, Retail Advisors, Ken Matthews Garden Center, Jesse and Sally White, and Appomattox River Company. Co-sponsoring the event were Virginia Beach Sail and Power, Patuxent River Sail and Power, and Nansemond River Sail and Power.

To participate, adults made a \$20 donation to VIMS, while students contributed \$10. "If you care about Chesapeake Bay, there is no better organization to donate your money to than VIMS," says Walsh. "On top of that, it's fun! All you have to do is get a paddle and cruise on out."

Raffle tickets were sold in an effort to earn even more money for the Institute. This year's grand prize was a brand new Honda dinghy boat motor donated by the winners of the mermaid trophy, Mr. and Mrs. J. Douglas Mistler of Williamsburg. Chuck Smith of Hampton won the dinghy motor and first, second, and third place winners of the poker run won an assortment of different prizes including a cooler, radio, life jackets, and a trophy. All proceeds from the event were donated to VIMS from the Squadrons.



Donation: On August 17th, a check for \$3,000 was presented to VIMS as a result of the poker run. (Left to Right) Jennifer Dillon (VIMS' Associate Director of Development), Lieutenant Bill Walsh, Miriam Beckwith (VIMS' Annual Fund and Volunteer Coordinator), Commander Connie Beltz, Staff Commander Kay Simkins, and Past Rear Commander Norma Parrish. Photo courtesy of Bill Walsh

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Virginia Institute of Marine Science
School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, VA 23062
(804) 684-7000

Walsh says he hopes the event will continue to grow over the next few years, and has high hopes that the poker run will continue to raise money for VIMS. “Turning an event like this one into a huge success is a slow-moving process,” he says. “I don’t see why there is any reason we should not be able to raise \$50,000 per year in the future.”

Walsh encourages everyone to participate and says, “This is not a race. It’s an opportunity for participants to show how much they care about the Bay by getting out there and relaxing in it, while also contributing to an organization that does so much to improve its conditions.”

A tireless supporter of VIMS’ efforts to help the Bay, Walsh received the Freeman Volunteer Award—a VIMS service award—in 2011 for his involvement in the Poker Run and his efforts to educate others about the importance the Institute plays in the future of the Bay.



Raffle: Volunteer Arlene Anderson sells raffle tickets for the Honda dinghy boat motor donated by Douglas and Mrs. Mistler of Williamsburg. Photo courtesy of Bill Walsh