

Mount Desert Islander

Festival celebrates waterfront

Written by Jeff Walls



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Gallery BAR HARBOR — Several hundred people ventured out on a sunny Sunday afternoon to honor the men and women who make their living on the ocean. The annual Working Waterfront Celebration sheds light on the livelihood of the fisheries industry and promotes community involvement with industry issues such as waterfront access.

The festivities began on Saturday, May 31, with a boot shaking hoedown at the Kebo Valley Golf Course. The band Jones'n kicked out the jams for the more than 120 people in attendance.

The highlight of the night was the crowning of Miss Rockweed. The contest consisted of a three-part competition including a question-and-answer section oriented toward commercial fishing, a rope coiling competition and a crowd reaction section.

Jessica Norwood won the crown by a slim margin over Shelley Mitchell.

"There was some heavy competition for the crown. The last part was crowd applause only and it was very close," said event organizer Kelley Corson. "We were having a really hard time deciding between the two."

The events for June 1 began at noon on the town pier in Bar Harbor, with the Seafarer's Memorial, organized by the Maine Sea Coast Mission and the Bar Harbor harbormaster, Charlie Phippen.

Commercial and pleasure boats from all harbors on Mount Desert Island participated in a traditional blessing of the boats by local clergy for fair winds, prosperity, safe harbor and remembrance for those who have lost their lives at sea.

There were many activities geared toward children, including crafts, touch tanks, treasure-digging, cotton candy-munching and games. The bait bagging competition provided the younger crowd with a taste (and smell) of what it is like to be a lobsterman, as they stuffed herring into net bags as fast as they could.

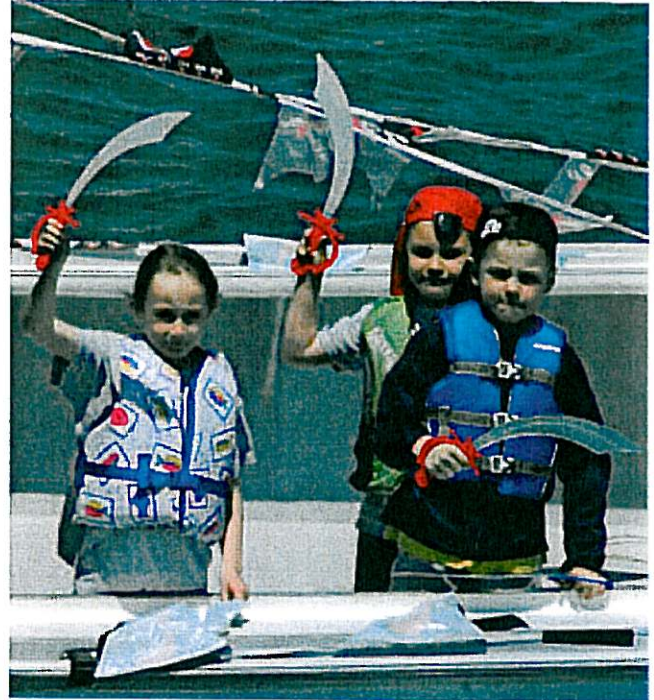
Lunch featuring hamburgers, hot dogs, fish chowder and many more tasty treats was served, with all money raised going to the fishermen's fund, which helps fishermen who get injured. Between the dance and the festivities on Sunday, the celebration netted nearly \$2,000 for the fund, according to Ms. Corson.

"All money raised above and beyond our expenses will go directly into a fishermen's health fund. If an island fisherman is injured or an immediate family member is injured and they aren't covered by health insurance, we would be able to offer some of those funds to give to them to help them out," Ms. Corson said. "We are also looking at possibly expanding the fund to help graduating high school seniors who want to go to school to pursue something to do with the fisheries, maritimes, or seamanship with scholarships. We are hoping to expand the fund to benefit a few more people and help the industry out."

Informational booths at the event were staffed by the Marine Patrol, Maine Sea Coast Mission, College of the Atlantic, The Mount Desert Island Biological Lab, Lobster Institute and the Island Institute.

The U.S. Coast Guard's vessel number 47282 and the Maine Seacoast Mission's Sunbeam, as well as several area lobster boats, were present for people to board and tour.

"It was really heartwarming to see the support of the community for the working waterfront," said Ms. Corson. "It is important for them to understand the importance of the fact that the fishermen need to have the access to the waterfront to be able to bring in their livelihood for their families and the economy and all of that. So, the support is really appreciated."



Avast ye landlubbers! This crew on Phil Corson's Nick's Sun Day came ready to score some bounty at the Working Waterfront Celebration —JEFF WALLS PHOTO