

Along the Canal: Every day is a boating day on the Erie Canal

Vicky Daly

So said Jeff Siegel, captain of the aCappella, which is both his home on the water and headquarters of ActiveCaptain, a free on-line resource used by boaters around the world. Jeff, his wife Karen, and their dogs. Dylan and DeeDee, have spent the last several weeks exploring the Erie Canal and talking to municipal leaders, canal enthusiasts, and the leadership of Canal NY Marketing and Business Alliance. Ideally, and happily, a good number of the people with whom they met fit into all three categories,

Active Captain, www.ActiveCaptain.com, provides its members with navigational information as well as information about the ports at which they might dock. Having started AC more than a decade ago because they, personally, discovered that a service of this sort was needed, Jeff and Karen continue to add updates regularly. Their presence on the Erie Canal this summer was prompted by the realization that our wonderful canal is under-appreciated and, therefore, under-used. Like a good number of other westbound boaters, the Siegels spent an unplanned four+ weeks at the eastern end of the Erie earlier in the season. The stop altered their plans but also confirmed their perception that the majority of boaters who could be coming west were not, for a variety of reasons. This validation of their impression and the 'variety of reasons' formed the substance of the later conversations.

Evidently not ones to just identify a problem and hand it off, Jeff and Karen have suggestions that could be implemented immediately at little or no cost and, of course, some larger ones which would require time and money, but which would be well worth both. At the top of the list for every single community along the NYS canals, not just the Erie, is participation in ActiveCaptain's "Activities and Assets' Survey (hereafter A&As). This is simply a list of A&As within a reasonable walking distance (actually measured) from a marina, occurring within the community during the canal season – farmers' markets, concerts and the like. Karen pointed out that her boat is her home so she wants to know also about grocery stores, laundromats, drug stores, and, in the Siegels' case, a vet. This fall a template will be developed so all information comes to ActiveCaptain in the same format. Once created, the template will be available during the winter for information gathering. The goal is to have the expanded resource available about each participating port before opening of the canal on May 1, 2014. That information, supplied by the communities and made available through ActiveCaptain will bring more boats to our marinas and encourage people to stay longer. Bottom line: this is a great opportunity for everyone. Thank you, Jeff and Karen for doing this.

Note: Canal NY will be meeting on Monday, August 26th, 10:30-1:00 at the Visitors Center, Spencerport. The meeting is open and we would love to have you join us. On September 23rd, the meeting will be in Little Falls. Again, please join us. The meetings are moved to different parts of the state to make it easier for people to do just that,

From the state wide aspect of the canal to the very, very local: I hope Canal Splash weekend was as successful in your canal community as it was in Palmyra. Through both planning and happenstance, it truly had something for everyone. The fact that the weather could not have been better was a much appreciated blessing. Perhaps after the incredible amount of rain we had just experienced, it was just time. Whatever the \reasons and/or sources of good fortune. It was a whale of a weekend.

The 7th annual appearance of the Historic Palmyra Erie Canal Pirates was ushered in by the traditional showing of "Goonies" in the village park. The few folks not yet in possession of their own personal Pirate Kazoos were able to acquire them that evening to be ready for the Pirate Kazoo Band Parade the following morning. The trophy for the Pillage in the Village Bed Race brought home to Palmyra last year by the Girls of Chill 'n'Grill, was retained locally by The Raiders, Pal-Mac Boys Lacrosse team. All bed race participants wisely refrained from joining the Zumba sessions taking place between bed race heats. It was noted, however, that a number of runners from the Jolly Roger 5K which took place earlier in the morning had sufficient energy to do just that.

Meanwhile, at the Port of Palmyra Marina, one short block north of Main Street, site of the parade, Zumba and bed races, boaters were greeted by a Palmyra Pirate Harbor Host. Craft and food vendors and musicians were setting up for afternoon activities. A highlight of the afternoon was the Palmyra Pirate Puppy Parade, our canine Miss/ Mister America Pageant. Walking off with the honors this year was Lacey, the Pomeranian. Foolishness? Yes. Fun? Yes. Worth coming to next year? Absolutely!