



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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Chelsea Carlson Freas, a meteorologist and founder of Sea Tactics, will serve as navigator for Leading the Change!.

### **Skipper Maya Hoffman Leading All-Women's Team in Annapolis-to-Newport Race**

*Annapolis, MD (May 11, 2023)* — History will be made during the 2023 Annapolis-to-Newport Race. For the first time ever, an all-women's crew will be competing.

Leading the Change! — a program in alignment with the renowned Magenta Project — is a team consisting of seven young, talented female sailors. They will be racing Kyrie, a Tartan 41000 owned by Annapolis resident Beth Berry.

This project is mission-driven and rooted in the values of equity, inclusion, environmentalism, and youth development. Skipper Maya Hoffman is organizing the Leading the Change! program with assistance from boat captain Emma Janson and navigator Chelsea Carlson Freas.

Other members of the crew are Callie Dawson (bow), Lily Flack (trimmer), Ellie Menezes (trimmer) and Leah Sweet (speed coach). The average age of the crew is 26 with Dawson the youngest at age 16. Dawson was a member of Team Bitter End, which became the first all-female youth team to complete the Newport-to-Bermuda Race.

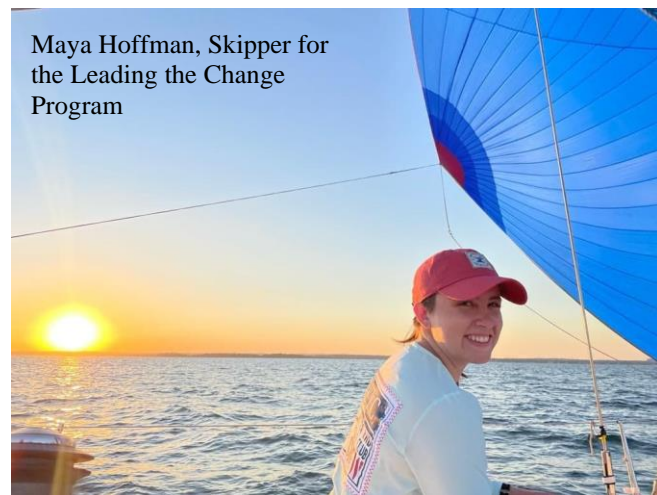
Flack, 20, is a product of the acclaimed MudRatz program that provides high-level racing opportunities for youth sailors and is currently a member of the St. Mary's College of Maryland intercollegiate dinghy team.

The Magenta Project is a collective of passionate, dedicated sailors committed to creating equal access and opportunities for women in sailing. Established by crew members of the successful Team SCA campaign for the 2014-15 Volvo Ocean Race, the Magenta Project mission is “developing pathways and generating opportunities for more equity and inclusion in sailing, leading with gender.” It is based on the principal values of collaboration, diversity, opportunity, challenge, and performance.

Now in its fifth year, the Magenta Project Mentoring Program provides opportunities for aspiring female sailors to excel and reach their potential in the sport. Each year, the program selects talented female sailors from across the world and pairs them with a mentor that is a highly accomplished and experienced sailor.

“What we’re doing is very aligned with the Magenta Project mission. Women are underrepresented in positions of leadership in offshore racing,” Hoffman said. “We are fully committed to advancing women in the sport by gaining more access and becoming more competitive. Our intent with this Annapolis-to-Newport Race program is to give young women with experience, skills, and talent a chance to be leaders offshore.”

Hoffman spent summers living with her grandparents in Monterey, California, and learned



Maya Hoffman, Skipper for the Leading the Change Program

to sail at age 8. She started racing dinghies at Monterey Peninsula Yacht Club then graduated to keelboats. She attended Mount Holyoke College and was a member of the Massachusetts-Amherst intercollegiate sailing team.

After graduating college, Hoffman lived in the Washington, D.C. area and got involved in racing on the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. She competed in buoy racing out of Herrington Harbour and raced Lightnings out of Severn Sailing Association and the Potomac River Sailing Association.



She did several point-to-point distance races, including the renowned Governor's Cup.

Hoffman spent six weeks with Oakcliff Sailing in Oyster Bay, New York and served as an onboard coach for Team Bitter End, a team consisting of seven students ages 16 to 18 from Lincoln High in Providence, Rhode Island. They trained aboard and raced a Farr 40 in Newport-to-Bermuda under the direction of Libby Greenhalgh, who was navigator for Team SCA and is one of the founders and directors for the Magenta Project.

Hoffman, who served as captain of the Farr 40 for the return delivery from Hamilton to Newport, moved back to California to attend graduate school at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Hoffman applied and was accepted to the Magenta Project Mentoring Program and paired with Carlson Freas, a meteorologist and founder of Sea Tactics. Carlson Freas is well known on the grand prix sailing circuit as a top-flight weather forecaster. She serves as meteorologist for the US Sailing team and recently provided forecasting for the International Etchells class world championships in Miami.

"I've been so fortunate to be working with her for the past eight months learning about weather routing and navigation," Hoffman said.

This past December, Hoffman met with Hanson and Lindsay Gimple, the Americas Mentee Representative for the Magenta Project. Their lunch discussion turned to offshore sailing, and they talked about how cool it would be to eventually put together an all-women's campaign for a major distance race.

"It seemed like a far-out dream, but then I went home and started reading through the Notice of Race for Annapolis-to-Newport," Hoffman said. "That race has always appealed to me because of the layers of navigational thought that goes into sailing that route."

Hoffman launched into putting together a crew and finding a boat. A huge part of the equation came together when Janson agreed to serve as boat captain and Carlson Freas signed on as navigator.

Berry provided the final piece of the puzzle when she agreed to allow Kyrie to be used as the platform for the campaign. Berry, who skippered the Tartan 4100 in four previous Annapolis-to-Newport Races, will be aboard in a consulting role.



Annapolis resident Beth Barry, is allowing Leading the Change! To sail her Tartan 4100 in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race.

“Beth has been very helpful as far as pointing us in the right direction as we get organized,” Hoffman said. “She’s very supportive of the mission of advancing women in the sport and is letting us have ownership of organizing the campaign.”

Team members are planning to gather in Annapolis this month for some practice sessions aboard the Tartan 4100 to begin the process of building chemistry.

“We have a lot of blue water ocean miles on the boat and there is considerable collective experience even though individually we’re all young,” Hoffman said. “The challenge is what drew us to this race. It’s going to push us and test us to be competitive in this environment.”

Hoffman and Janson are both pursuing master’s degrees in environmental fields and are Skippers for Sailors for the Sea Powered by Oceana. They are working with the organization to develop and test offshore sailor sustainability practices, on and off the water. They will be documenting the journey of upholding those best practices during the A2N campaign for Leading the Change!

Janson and Hoffman are also creating materials and giving educational presentations to community members on the areas of environmental concern and interest along the A2N race out. They aim to use existing data collection methods to understand the water and its properties along the race route and map the debris the boat comes across using GIS.

“We want to use A2N as a platform to start a conversation and effect change. It’s really a gender equity mission designed to generate opportunities and develop pathways,” Hoffman said. “Hopefully, these women aboard this boat will use this experience for future projects that will advance themselves and others in the sailing industry.”

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