

Winter 2023



Washington Canoe Club

CURRENTS



Dear WCC Members and Friends,

In this season of reflection, we celebrate the 119th year of the Washington Canoe Club and the outstanding achievements of our paddling community this year.

With 60 active racing members, we secured 33 medals at the US Sprint Canoe and Kayak Nationals, placing three on Team USA. Member volunteers improved facilities. Community engagement thrived, and new boats enhanced racing programs. We launched a successful youth paddling camp and canoe-kayaking clinic. Beyond our community, we partnered with eight non-profits, offering over 200 individuals transformative paddling experiences on the Potomac.

Beyond the metrics, it's also the intangible moments that define us – family time on the Potomac, the laughter of kids leaping off docks to go for a swim, breathtaking sunsets, and the bonds of old and new friendships.

As we approach the year-end, we confront the big challenge – the rehabilitation of our iconic boathouse. Despite initial setbacks, our resilient volunteers, in collaboration with engineers and architects, have devised a solid phase 1 plan that has been submitted to the NPS for approval.

WCC belongs to us all, and your contribution matters. If you have not done so already, please consider making an end-of-year gift to the Friends of the Washington Canoe Club. Your generosity, whether large or small, is an investment in preserving history and is entirely tax deductible. Visit

WashingtonCanoeClub.org/MemberDonors to make your donation. Together, let's propel WCC into a bright and successful future.

Thank You and Happy New Year!

To stay informed, check out valuable information posted almost daily on the private WCC member's [Facebook](#) page. Make sure to check out 🥰 [Our Instagram](#) 🥰

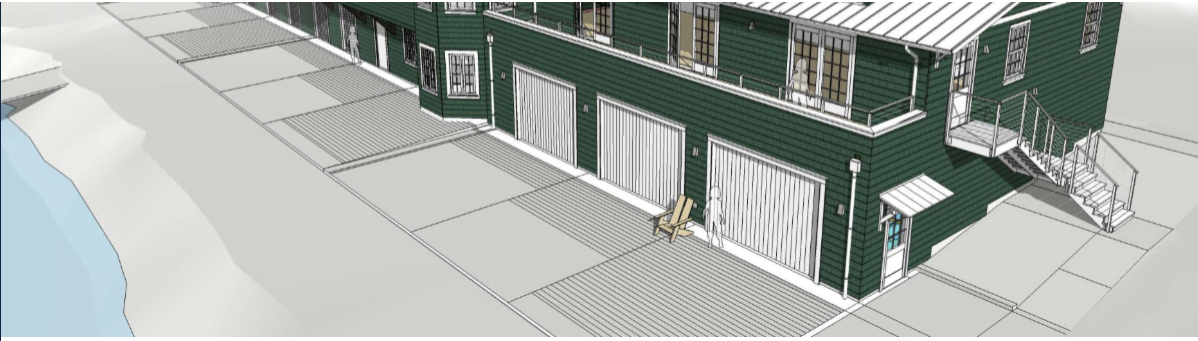


Welcome to our Winter 2023 issue of *Currents!*

In this issue:

- **Membership renewal for 2024 opens on January 1**
- **Oyster Roast – January 14**
- Welcome new Entertainment Committee co-chairs and new keeper of the beer fridge
- 2023 Annual Meeting Summary
- Meet your new board members by **Liz Pennisi**
- Cold water paddling safety tips
- Racing Season Recap by **Gavin Ross and Nate Day**
- And more...





Proposed rehabilitated boathouse.

Just a quick technical note... Gmail "clips" lengthy email messages. So make sure that when you come to what you might think is the end of the newsletter, click on "view entire message." You will know you've come to the end when you get to the shout-out!

Upcoming Events

WCC 2024 Membership Renewal Opens January 1 and Ends January 31

All returning members must [re-register](#), sign the waiver, and pay 2024 dues in SportsEngine, *including non-resident and honorary lifetime members.*

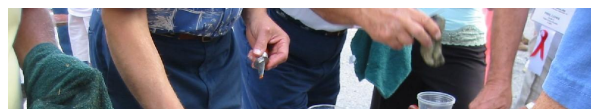
If you selected the quarterly payment option in 2023 you must set it up again for 2024 during the registration process — it does not carry over.

Please email the WCC Membership Chair, [Kelsa Gabehart](#), to let her know if you are changing your membership status. **Please register by January 31, 2024.**

Any boat/board storage changes should be directed to Commodore [Tim Johnson](#). Fees for additional boat storage (those with more than one boat/board) will be invoiced separately after registration is complete. The invoice will come in February from SportsEngine, independent of the registration process.

We look forward to paddling with you in 2024!

Oyster Roast
Sunday, January 14



1:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Rain, Snow, Sleet, Hail, or Shine)

Hosted by WCC's new Entertainment Committee co-chairs, Carmela Leith, and Adrienne Leon!



Let's get together and celebrate the new year with a traditional WCC oyster roast!

We'll shuck and feast on Kent Island's finest oysters! oysters! raw raw raw! (steamed, chowdered and sauteed), along with burgers, hot dogs, various sides, beer, wine, non-alcoholic drinks, and desserts.

\$30 adults (18+), \$100 families (children under 12 free).

Pay at the gate. Credit cards or cash.

Volunteers needed! As you know, this is a volunteer-run club and it takes many hands to throw a successful party. It's also a great opportunity to connect with like-minded members, new and old. We need folks to help with set up, registration, food table, clean up, etc... No experience is needed to volunteer, you will be provided with all you need. To volunteer, email entertainment@washingtonganoecclub.org if you can help out.

Open to all WCC members and their guests. An Evite will be sent next week. Please do your best to RSVP to help us plan.

We hope to see you there!

Remember there is no guest parking at the club. Here is a [guide](#) to parking in Georgetown.

News and Information





Carmela and Adrienne planning events for 2024

Meet WCC's New Entertainment Committee Co-Chairs

We are so fortunate to have **Carmela Leith**, a beloved longtime WCC member, and **Adrienne Leon**, an enthusiastic new member, stepping into the role previously held by **Lisa Ramm** for six years before the onset of Covid.

The Entertainment Committee is tasked with organizing and overseeing various club-wide events. These events include Crab Feasts, Oyster Roasts, the annual awards banquet, and club meetings—activities that are fun and cultivate a sense of community among our members. The committee is also responsible for handling requests from both members and community partner groups seeking to host parties and events at the club.

Thank you Carmela and Adrienne!

All Hail Tom Lane, Keeper of the WCC Beer Fridge

Thank You, **Tom (Kimberley's husband)** for taking over this extremely important task from **Kyle Kosinsky**. Tom keeps the fridge stocked with a variety of tasty cold beverages for us to enjoy for the low low price of ONE DOLLAR. You can pay via Venmo in addition to putting your dollar bills in the “till” hanging on the wall above the fridge. Just scan the QR code hanging on the fridge (and posted on the microwave) to pay online.

Honor system folks. We can only keep this unique little perk of WCC membership going if you PAY for the beverages you take! And if you can, contribute more.





2023 Annual Meeting Recap

The **119th Annual Meeting** of the Washington Canoe Club was held via Zoom on November 16, 2023. There were informative presentations made by each of the club's committee chairs, and the election of the Board of Governors who will serve the club in 2024.

If you missed the meeting, do not despair. You can [download the presentation](#) and watch the [Zoom video](#) (including post-presentation Q&A) on the members-only section of the website where you'll also find the minutes of past board meetings.

Here's a brief summary of the meeting:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

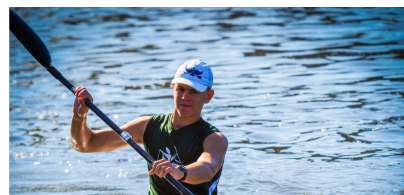
President **Andrew Soles** thanked the Board and officers then gave an overview of the Club's objectives. It's important for members to know:

- We are relevant and representative of DC and engaged in the national and international paddling community.
- Rehabilitation of the historic clubhouse is our priority
- Positive member experience, transparent and efficient administration

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership chair **Kelsa Gabehart** went over current membership dues rates (no increase) along with these highlights:

- 46 new members in 2023
- 375 members, 328 count toward the membership cap
- 44% of members have joined in the past 4 years
- There is not currently a waitlist for memberships





WCC's paddlers compete at US Sprint Nationals

COMMODORE'S REPORT

Commodore **Tim Johnson** reported on 2023's hugely successful racing season:

WCC PADDLING PROGRAMS

- Another amazing season of racing
- 26 events in the US, Europe and S. America with many podium finishes
- 33 medals at US Sprint Nationals
- 3 paddlers on Team USA
- Teams for all ages and abilities

SUMMER CAMP 2023

- Junior team paddlers ran a week-long summer camp at WCC introducing kids from ages 10-13 to sprint canoe, kayak, SUP and outrigger
- Planning on running multiple sessions in 2024



Tim then presented a list of new Club boats and storage and thanked all of our amazing coaches for their dedication to our programs.

QUESTIONS?

Purchase requests? Waitlist questions? Want to get involved with the aquatics committee? Reach out to Tim at aquatics@washingtoncanoeclub.org

BUILDING & GROUNDS REPORT

Vice President **Jim Ross**:

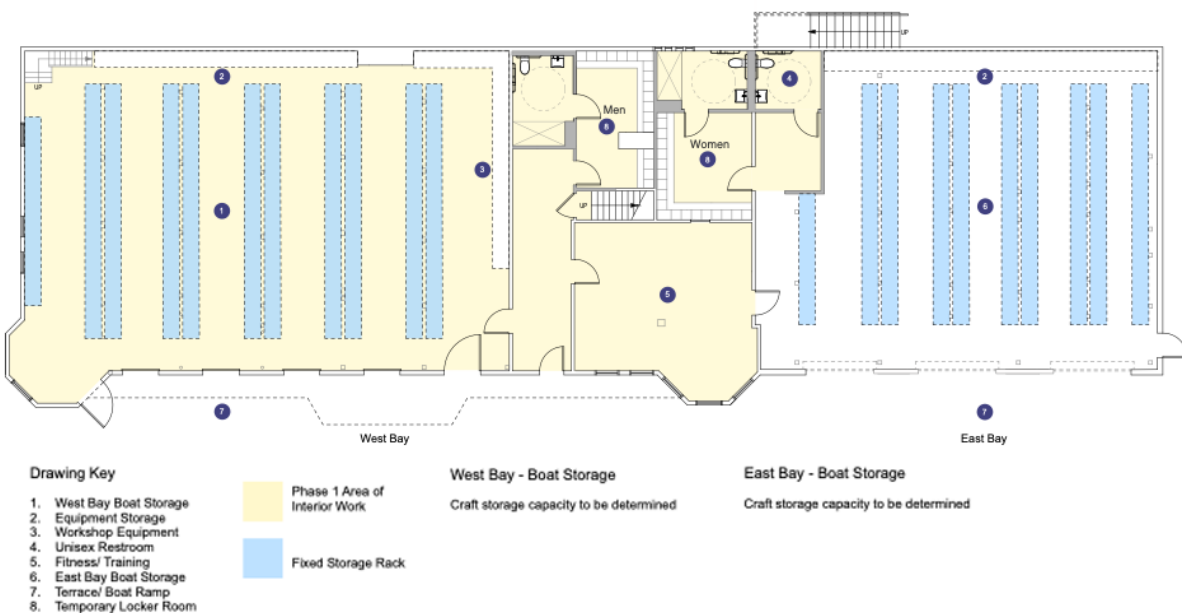
- We had two productive work parties
- Thanks to **Larry Martin** for regularly cutting the grass all year.
- In October, the Club invested in an electric weed wacker that is stored in the locked section of the boathouse. If you'd like to help keep the weeds and grass under control, reach out to **Jim Ross** for access.



- We lengthened the center ramp **Dan Havens** led the effort to rebuild the elite athlete extraction contraption.
- The canal has been drained for two years so the concrete pad is dry. NPS is planning extensive work to fix the leaking.
- No dock move this year due to mild winter predictions.
- We had a work party to disassemble and rebuild a new section of the dock.
- Thanks to all volunteers who take out the trash, sweep out the bays, and do what needs to be done to make improvements.

BOATHOUSE REHABILITATION REPORT

Boathouse rehabilitation co-chair **David Cottingham** detailed the slow but steady progress his team is making in getting approvals for an affordable plan that will allow us to occupy the first floor of the boathouse.



2023 Ground Floor Plan showing changing rooms and bathrooms

2023 revised proposal that has been submitted to NPS for approval

- Occupy the entire first floor
- Repair structural degradation
- Repair/replace exterior shingles
- Repair/replace roof
- Install women's and men's bathrooms/changing areas
- Install indoor boat storage
- Raise the West bay

Phases of the general development plan were outlined in detail. ([Download](#) the full report and watch the Zoom video **including the post-presentation Q&A.**)





Structural degradation in need of repair

Next steps:

- Revised proposal has been submitted to NPS and review agencies
- Prepare construction-level drawings
- Obtain construction approvals
- Raise the money for the project
- Start construction

A plan has been submitted to the board to remove, document, and restore the historic cartoon frieze.



Historic cartoon frieze in need of restoration.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer **Joel Rynes** went over the budget and laid out the club's financial highlights:

- Total WCC assets continue to grow.
- Increased emphasis on fundraising activities.
- National Park Service accepted lease off-sets.
- Substantially higher SWAG sales than anticipated.
- No due or fee increase in 2024.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Grace Hong reported that we are making excellent progress toward our goal of raising over \$1 million, utilizing a blend of fundraising, reserves, community support, and potential grants to finance the Phase 1 proposal.

- The case for support has been revised, and we are actively advancing through the silent phase of the capital campaign.
- For more information or if you are interested in joining the fundraising

committee, please reach out to Grace at fundraising@washingtoncanoecub.org



City Kids Mountaineers preparing for a canoe trip in Wyoming

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Hosting community, educational, and charitable groups is one way we fulfill our club's objective of "expanding paddle sport opportunities and encouraging and engaging a diverse group of paddlers at all levels".

Louise Flynn, Gloria Vestal and Jim Ross reported on all the groups we served in 2023:

- Boy Scouts – May
- DC Public Schools Outdoor Pursuits Program – July
- Jubilee Youth Services Learn to Swim and Canoe Program – July
- DC Preservation League and Capital Pride Alliance Crab Feast Fundraiser – October
- Team River Runner 2023 DC Biathlon – May (make-up for 2022) and October
- Soul Trak College Ambassador's Cohort – September
- City Kids – May and October

Thanks to all the organizers and volunteers who help us partner with these various organizations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The new slate of officers was voted on and approved.

ELECTED TERM OFFICERS:

President: **Andrew Soles**
Vice President: **Jim Ross**
Treasurer: **Joel Rynes**
Secretary: **Gloria Vestal**
Commodore: **Tim Johnson**
Vice Commodore: **Stephen Weiss**
Board of Governors at Large:
Tom Cooney
Louise Flynn
Grace Hong
Carrie Klein
Michael Leith

LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN 2023:

At Large: **Jay Gopal, Kevin Rooney,** and **Gloria Vestal** retiring
Officers: **Trish Riggs** retiring will be replaced by **Gloria Vestal**
Newly elected: **Louise Flynn, Carrie Klein** and **Michael Leith**

THANK YOU WCC COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Boathouse Rehabilitation Committee
Co-Chairs: **David Cottingham** and **Christie Ciabotti**
Building Fundraising Committee:
Grace Hong, Coralie Miller, Melissa Groth Miller
Membership Chair: **Kelsa Gabehart**
Entertainment Co-Chairs: **Carmela Leith** and **Adrienne Leon**

REMEMBERING JOE LEDERLE

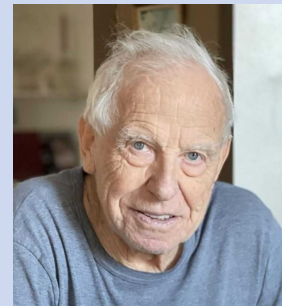
Andrew Soles gave a heartfelt tribute to **Joe Lederle**, a long-time WCC member, who helped to keep the building together for decades.

"This is the guy who in many ways single single-handedly led the work done in the 80s and 90s to keep the club standing after many years of flooding, termite damage, etc.... What we see today is nothing compared to the level of degradation that the club had experienced in that era."

"He was a wonderful vibrant spirited individual who did so much for WCC and the community. We all owe a debt of gratitude for all the great work he did to keep the club going."

[Obituary](#)

Andrew also honored **Chisolm McAvoy**, acknowledging that his generosity in his will provided the seed money that helped bring our reserves to their current state.



Meet the club's new leadership

By Elizabeth Pennisi

At the WCC annual meeting, there are three new faces elected to the

board. Here they are

Louise Flynn

For newly elected WCC board member Louise Flynn, once was not enough. A familiar and much-welcomed face at both the masters' sprint and the women's outrigger workouts, Louise joined the WCC about 14 years ago. A touring kayaker, having learned to paddle while living in Alaska, she at first paddled out of Jack's (now the SUP/Canoe concession under the Key Bridge) until two friends suggested she join the club. At the time, "I thought 'why would anyone want to race kayaks,' but then I was converted."



She enjoyed the Saturday morning comradery among the juniors and adult paddlers and on her first trip to the ACA Canoe Sprint National Championships was the top paddler in her age group. Several years ago, she became a WCC board member at large but because her work began sending her on so many trips, she kept missing meetings. "This was pre-pandemic, so there was no Zoom."

But even when not on the board, she's helped out a lot, working closely with entertainment chair Lisa Ramm, and staffing many community events and fund-raising dinners. "But the WCC is such a big player in my life that I wanted to play a bigger role," she recalls. Now less travel and Zoom meetings should make that possible.

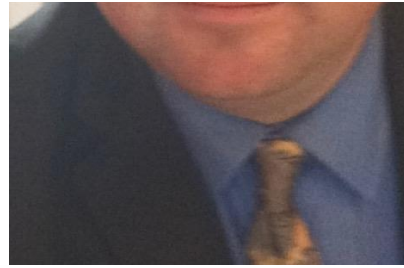
As a new board member, Louise hopes to help the club become more of a social place for the entire membership, where old-timers new-timers, and recreational and competitive paddlers mingle more. She yearns for the building rehabilitation to start and dreams about indoor bathrooms and showers. But most of all, she plans to work on community outreach. "I would like to see more of the local community exposed to water sports that they might not otherwise have access to."

Michael Leith

New board member Michael Leith married into paddling. His wife, Carmela, is our new entertainment committee co-chair and Jim Ross's sister. (Jim is the big, always smiling WCC member who fixes everything and is almost always at the club) So, they and their three children – Alistair, Graham, and Brigid – have been visiting their champion sprint C-1 cousins Gavin and Ian Ross at the club since



1999. “My wife and kids are avid canoeists and I love them,” says Michael. “If I can help them and help the WCC I will.”



The two sons followed in their cousins’ footsteps and joined the Aquatics program pre-pandemic. The family became members in 2019. He repeatedly helps build and move docks, works hard at spring cleanups, and rarely misses oyster roasts and crab feasts. He can’t stay upright for more than a second in a high-kneel canoe, but his sons are turning into very competitive racers, so this year he drove them and a teammate to Florida for the ACA Canoe Sprint National Championships.

He plans to get more involved in creating an online repository of WCC photos, documents, and past meeting minutes and when asked if he was interested in joining the board and helping organize and standardize club policies, he eagerly said yes. “It’s a club, but everyone is an individual in a boat,” so it can be hard to get everyone on the same page, he points out. As a board member, he says his primary goal is “Do no harm.” So, at first, he plans to sit back and listen to better understand what the club members want to do. “But there needs to be a back office with more consolidation and organization” of club records, he says. Having that data will help with bank loans, working with the IRS, and getting other funding. The club’s future is very important to him, he adds. “It’s kind of a haven inside the urban jungle.”

Carrie Klein

Carrie Klein comes to the WCC board as an outrigger paddler who joined the novice program three summers ago but has spent the past two years racing with the women’s team. That paddling came after a 23-year hiatus from water.



Growing up, she was part of a family very much involved in water activities, and while a youth in Panama, she raced cayucos through the Panama Canal.

With just three years as a member under her belt, she says she is tuned into what it’s like to be new here and hopes to help other new members quickly feel part of this community. Member needs also need to be addressed, and she hopes to help ensure everyone gets to compete at the level they want to and find opportunities to connect with other members.

For the past five months, as part of the outrigger steering committee, she’s learned the ins and outs of rigging and de-rigging the 6-man outriggers and was involved in behind-the-scenes logistics for organizing races and weighing

the canoes.

She's helped out at social events: She and her husband waited tables at the fundraising sunset dinner last year, and she and her son worked the jazz dinner. "I'm getting to know people, have gotten a lot out of being a part of the club, and I wanted to give back to the community," Carrie says about her new role. From her experiences with other organizations as a member, teacher, or leader, Carrie has learned the value of providing opportunities to learn new skills and new ideas. For herself, that means learning more about all the WCC teams, about fund-raising, and about how the board and club really work. She's also eager to connect WCC veterans with newbies so the knowledge, lore, and love of the club can be passed on. As she says, "I want the WCC to be the best club it can be."



Paddling "The Marcy" in late November.

Cold Water Paddling Safety at WCC

WCC members are fortunate that we get to paddle year-round while other clubs and venues close for the season. As of mid-November, the river temperatures have fallen below 50 f. Please be mindful that even if the air temps are "warm", immersion in the river is dangerous.

Although the Club does not have an official list of cold water paddling rules, here are some basic guidelines to help safeguard paddlers in cold weather.

- Wear a life jacket/PFD, especially if the air or water temperature is below 40' F. Members and guests paddling club boats are required to wear a PFD.
- Paddle with a buddy. If you're heading out alone, please let someone know you're out, where you're heading, and when you expect to return.
- All paddle craft must have a light on board if you're out before sunrise or after sunset.
- Take a cell phone or other form of communication with you, especially if you're on your own.
- If the water is cold and the weather looks bad (high winds or storms), stay safe by remaining on land.
- Paddle near shore. Know yourself and your skills. Don't go out just because "other people are out there."
- Always dress for the water temperature—no exceptions.
- Field-test your gear.
- Imagine the worst that can happen and plan for it.

For further guidance on cold weather paddling, members are encouraged to consult these resources:

- [National Center for Cold Water Safety](#)
- [Safe Cold Water Paddling from Paddling.com](#)
- [Potomac River Safety Committee](#)
- [Paddling Tips for Cold Water](#)



Also check out [this video](#) from the U.S. Coast Guard's Cold Water Boot Camp USA featuring **Professor Popsicle**.

The WCC History Book is Still Available



Images of America: Washington Canoe Club, by WCC lifetime honorary member **Chris Brown**, is still available for [purchase](#) (and all proceeds from the sale will go to the boathouse restoration fund). Or [donate](#) \$250 or more to the restoration fund and receive a complimentary signed copy.

Head over to our [history page](#) and watch **Chris Brown's Virtual Book Talk** that was given via Zoom on December 3, 2020.

Team Announcements

WCC Coaches: Rachel Shackelford, Cheryl Zook, Lisa Ramm (Women's Outrigger), Nate Day (Men's Outrigger), Joe Cafferata (Rec Outrigger), David Podloch, Gavin Ross (Junior's), Thom Crockett (Master's Kayak), and Kathy Summers (SUP)



Sprint Team

By Gavin Ross

- US national Team Trials in April, 2nd 3rd and 6th in the nation for mens senior c1 1000 and 500. 1st and 3rd in mens c2 500. 2nd in junior c1 1000. and 7th k1 500, 8th in k1 1000, 5th in k2 500 with **Sam Rhodes**. Sam was 7th in B final k1 500 and 1000 and 5th in junior mens 200
- Canada Day in July, several top 10 finishes in junior k1 and c1 and 2 silvers in senior mens c4
- Junior and Under 23 World Champs in July, **Alistair** raced c2 and was in the top 20, teamed up with a womens canoeist for the 5k relay and finished top 15, and **Liam** came in top 15 in mens k4
- Nationals in August, 15 gold, 11 silver, 7 bronze (including masters paddlers) **Sam Rhodes** winning his 1st ever national championship in the k1 5k
- Pan Ams in October, Ian raced mens c2 500 and came in 6th





Men's Outrigger

By Nate Day

In terms of the season itself, on the men's side, it was gratifying to secure victories over both NCA (after a considerable hiatus) and Wrightsville Beach at Monumental. Numerous individuals contributed significantly to managing various logistics, enabling us to participate in Blackburn—a feat repeated at Chattajack later in the season. Our mixed crew at Catalina earned a spot on the podium in the open division, despite having only two paddlers in the open (younger) age group. The men's crew displayed remarkable resilience.

The racing season extended into early November, encompassing Wrightsville's race in mid-October, Chattajack—where, for the first time, we fielded two mixed OC6 crews, one of which secured a podium finish—and the Nish Paddlefest in Miami on November 5.

It's noteworthy that the club's support for acquiring *Manu o Ku*, our second unlimited canoe, aligns with the evolving direction of the sport. This investment makes it more feasible for WCC team members to participate in races like Blackburn, Catalina, and Chattajack, covering longer distances at a faster pace.

End-of-Season Outrigger Results

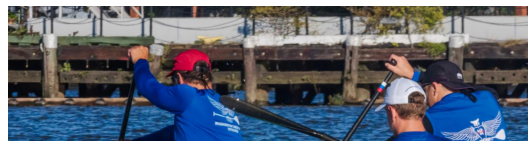


Queen Lili'uokalani Canoe Race, Sept 2-3

- Sent 2 Women's OC6 crews, one raced a Koa Canoe, and took 1st in our division
- The crews combined the next day to race an OC12
- **Kim** and **Lisa R** raced OC2 and took 1st

Catalina Crossing, Sept 9-10

- We sent one mixed crew and one mens crew.
- Mixed took 3rd place





Middle States, Oct 8

WCC hosted national champions from around the world, a few people racing for the very first time and an amazing crew of volunteers, led by Stephen Weiss!



Minimental, Oct 9

WCC had a small but mighty contingent

LONG COURSE

- **Sam Rhodes** was **fastest craft** in the long course in a surfski
- **Lisa R** took 2nd in womens
- **Blaise** and **Mike** took 1st men's OC2
- **Erin K** and **Barry** took 1st mixed OC2

SHORT COURSE

- **Blaise** and **Sam** took 1st mens OC2
- **Lisa R** and **Mike** took 1st mixed OC2

[photos](#)



Chattajack

- **Kelly Rhodes** won women's
- The mixed crew of **Jo, Carissa, Rachel, Kyle, Ken,** and **Brenden** took 3rd



NISH, Nov 4-5

- Mixed OC6 took 4th place in a very competitive field of 25 crews
- Theresa and Lisa were the first women's OC2 across this line
- Mike and Stuart won men's Sr Masters OC2

[Video](#)

It takes a lot of good organization and support to get teams and boats to away races so a **huge thanks to all who support and participate in our racing programs! Congratulations to all!**

WCC Merch is Still Available

While supplies last!



Hats and visors in white and high-viz yellow: \$35

Blue/white performance short-sleeved shirts in crew neck (men's) and v-neck (women's) - \$35. These were designed by our very own **Kyle Kosinski** and manufactured by Headsweats.



Bright blue practice jerseys! Racerback/sleeveless tanks/short sleeves - \$25. Long sleeves are \$30. Crew neck (men's) and v-neck (women's). These were produced by Talis.

Please email lisa.man@gmail.com for payment/delivery details.

And Finally...

Shout Out!

And, a big THANK YOU to our outgoing at large board members **Jay Gopal**, **Kevin Rooney**, **Gloria Vestal**, and outgoing secretary **Trish Riggs**. We appreciate the time and attention you've given to make the Club a great place - now and in the future.

If you know of a WCC member who should get a shout-out (and there are many), [let us know](#).



Show Your Club Spirit and Look Good Doing It!

Any item can be customized with your name.

The WCC Squad Locker stores have a wide variety of club-branded items for members of all ages (including infants and toddlers). All items allow for personalization through the ordering process. With embroidered items, you can put your name (or mantra) on the sleeve. If an item has a printed logo, you can get your name (or nickname) on the back or sleeve. Hats are personalized on the back band area. Both shops are periodically updated and changed, so keep checking back. If there's something you would like to see offered, [let us know](#).

Visit the [Spring/Summer Store](#)

Visit the [Fall/Winter Store](#)

Thanks to Bonnie Havens for all her hard work on the stores.

THANK YOU to all club volunteers

If you have an idea for a contribution to the next issue of *Currents*, please reach out to one of your newsletter team members at Newsletter@WashingtonCanoeClub.org.

We love hearing from you!



Washington Canoe Club | 3700 Water St. NW, Washington, DC 20007

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