



(From left) Paula Meyer, Antje Flanders, Tyler Flanders, James Dietz Jr., Jim Dietz, Ann Jonik and Gary Piantedosi pose with their first-place trophies. PHOTO KATY WARD

# All on board for the Coastal Rowing Regatta

By Katy Ward  
Banner Staff

PROVINCETOWN — Celebrity rowers churned Provincetown harbor's East End waters last Saturday at the town's inaugural Coastal Rowing Regatta.

This was the first open-water slide-seat rowing event held in the northeast region, following its debut in Pensacola, Fla., in 2015. The event included 37 participants from around the country, ranging from five to more than 50 years old. The race started at about 9:30 a.m. near St. Mary's Episcopal Church.

"This is what rowing should be," said rowing legend Jim Dietz. "It was such a wonderful experience. Friendly people and great water. ... I will definitely do it again next year."

Dietz is a three-time Olympic rower, competing in 1972, 1976 and 1980. He now serves on the board of directors for USRowing and is the head coach of the rowing team at University of Massachusetts in Amherst, among

other things.

"I'm really happy," said Al Flanders, head coach and president of Orleans Sweeps and Sculls (OSS). "Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves and the weekend we picked was ideal. Last weekend was crowded due to Memorial Day, this weekend not so much, which is exactly why I chose this."

The event started with 21 single rowers, followed by nine doubles, two quads and five participating in the mini triathlon, which included a 150-meter swim, 150-meter run and 1,000-meter row. John Rhee and John Wik, along with other national referees, made the calls. What sets coastal rowing apart from traditional flat-water rowing is the preferred rough waters and extreme conditions, which Rhee calls "the mountain biking version of rowing."

He said coastal rowing is especially popular in other areas of the world including Europe, Asia and Canada, but "the U.S. hasn't fully embraced this sport." Rhee said he would like to bring more attention to coastal rowing and



James Dietz Jr. rows his way to the gold men's open FISA class trophy. PHOTOS VINCENT GUADAZNO



This was the first time Olympic rower Jim Dietz competed in open water, and here he flies past the referees.

hopefully make this an Olympic sport one day.

"The turnout was fabulous," said John Livingstone, founder of the youth rowing and health program and an OSS board member. "A lot of enthusiastic people from all over and the weather was cooperative. [It] could have been a little windier and a little choppier, but for the most part I think people really enjoyed themselves."

"We like choppy white waters, lots of wind and big surf," Ron Robillard, commodore of the Provincetown Yacht Club, added.

Winners were announced at an after-party at the gazebo on the pier.

"I'm looking forward to seeing this thing growing," said harbor-master-pier manager Rex McKinsey. "It didn't interrupt any of the excursions and it seems the national referees felt positive about this venue."

Each winner received a Pilgrim Monument trophy, symbolic of when the Pilgrims first rowed ashore in 1620.

"I am so appreciative for all of the sponsors," said Flanders. "We tried to make this a quality event with food, flags and T-shirts, which could not have happened without their support."

Next year organizers hope to see this program grow into

something bigger and become a staple on the main event calendar. And from the sounds of it, this may just happen.

"This was such a well-run event," said Wik. "The local organizing committee did an exceptional job. I would like to see a bit of rougher seas, but this venue has a lot to offer."

Flanders agreed.

"We had a lot of rowers come here just to watch the event, but are now saying they want to participate next year," said Flanders. "The comments were very positive, a lot of people said they are going to bring their friends next year, so hopefully it will be much bigger."