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Getting involved doesn't have to take much; it might mean keeping a stock of school supplies aboard to deliver to those in need, donating your yacht's time when there are no charters or guests aboard or even attending a function where all proceeds go to the underprivileged.



Yachting FOR A CAUSE

BEYOND WRITING A CHECK TO A FAVORITE CHARITY, YACHT OWNERS HAVE FOUND INTERACTIVE WAYS TO GIVE BACK—OFTEN FROM THE DECKS OF THEIR OWN YACHTS.

TEXT BY GRACE TROFA, JANINE KETTERER AND CAROLINE WHITE



RESPECTFUL THAT MANY ARE STILL STRUGGLING as the economy slowly recovers, the megayacht community has maintained a low profile, less inclined to flaunt their wealth. Quietly though, many are giving back. From delivering school supplies to the Third World to hosting scientists on board, there is much good yacht owners can do from their yachts, sometimes without even changing course.

Make a Stop On Your Voyage

YachtAid Global's tagline is, in fact, "changing the world without changing course." YAG, for short, was formed in 2006 by former captain Mark Drewelow who spent 20 years traveling the world, spending extended periods in remote locations. "What happens out there is the local people are always eager to help. They might be living in a grass hut with nothing but a fishing pole and a line and sleeping on a mat, but if you have a need, they want to help, to establish a connection. I just felt I had to find a way to give back."

When he came ashore in 2003 and started his yacht agent business, C2C, in San Diego, California, he found a way. To date, he's coordinated about 75 deliveries of supplies by megayachts to remote locations including Indonesia, French Polynesia, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Belize, Chile, Brazil and more. This is all done by word of mouth: talking with captains and crew, determining where there is a need, working with volunteer ambassadors who organize the transition of materials. Typically, deliveries are primary school supplies but also have included food, cooking supplies and medical aid. "In most of these areas, there is no concept of charitable giving. We, and loosely formed organizations like us, are the only source of aid," says Drewelow.

A number yachts are committed to doing YAG deliveries. The first to step forward in 2006 was the 147-foot sailing yacht *Timoneer*. Her captain, Phil Wade, says he always used to bring

along presents to give away during the voyage. "You go to all these places, steaming along to some little island in the South Pacific or Africa, and you see these people living in abject poverty and you come in on a multimillion-dollar yacht; it sort of looks strange," says Wade.

After linking up with YAG, they keep a stock of about \$500 worth of school supplies aboard. "One of our favorite places in the world is the San Blas Island in Panama where the Kuna Indians have a reservation. We always take stuff to them. They follow us through the streets, weaving their way through these little alleyways in between the grass huts; you become like the Pied Piper!" says Wade. "Guests also get involved, and it is a fantastic experience and a cultural education for everyone to see how the other half lives." One year, *Timoneer* went back and forth through the Panama Canal five times because the owners wanted to share the experience with their friends.

"It is always fascinating to actually interact with the people instead of just being off anchor and walking around the island and just sort of staring at the people," says Wade. "My expression that I use all the time is, 'It's nice to be nice.'"

For the first four years, Drewelow's company, C2C, paid for most supplies. More recently, YAG became more formally structured with a volunteer board of advisors in place and as a registered nonprofit to accept tax-deductible donations. The 156-foot motor yacht *Slojo*—a major supporter that delivers supplies around the South Pacific—has stepped forward to fund specific programs. The boat has a no-tipping policy; however, if guests are so inclined to tip, the money goes to YAG projects. The crew also has raised tens of thousands of dollars through fundraising.

Tim Forderer, captain of the 88-foot sailing yacht *Vivid*, was introduced to YAG while making inquiries about contributing to villages they would be sailing to in Indonesia. "There was a lot of



PHOTOS COURTESY OF YACHTAID GLOBAL (BOTTOM, TOP LEFT), OPERATION CRUISE (TOP RIGHT), BY FOREST JOHNSON (MIDDLE)



“There is a growing number of [yachts] that are making a contribution to each place they go, and the goodwill it creates for all of us is immeasurable.”

– CAPTAIN TIM FORDERER

synergy between what I was doing and what Mark was accomplishing with YAG.”

One of the most memorable visits for Forderer was to Komodo, a remote Indonesian island famous for the man-eating Komodo dragon. “The Komodo schoolchildren put on an incredible presentation for us, dancing and singing about how they love their country; it was really very touching from the moment we walked on the island and presented them with the school supplies,” says Forderer. “You could tell it was like a drop of water in the desert and more was needed. As we were leaving, a teacher approached me with a letter with three basic needs: sports supplies, a computer and, lastly, a fence. The teachers spend half their time keeping the dragons away; a little nine-year-old child is an easy snatch. I contacted Mark...within thirty seconds of my explanation he met me halfway with my personal contribution. Working with the representative of the Komodo National Park we put the project together and within three weeks we had built a six-foot tall, four hundred-meter long fence surrounding the school, and the children are now safe.

“Throughout Southeast Asia, the Philippines [and] Indonesia we have probably done fifteen to twenty drops of supplies,” says Forderer. “The general feeling is that yachts come and take and use the resources in the area. But there are a growing number of people who are making a contribution to each place they go, and the doors that are opened and the goodwill it creates for all of us is immeasurable.”

Attend a Yacht Rendezvous

Founded in 1860 in Connecticut, Boys & Girls Clubs today is a

national movement of four million children, one of the largest youth-serving agencies in the U.S. And one of the largest Boys & Girls Clubs organizations in the nation is located in Broward County, Florida, home to the U.S. yachting capital of Fort Lauderdale. Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County has 13 facilities with a membership of more than 13,000 youth. Made up of three core programs—healthy lifestyle, academic success and good character and citizenship—each activity stresses positive self image.

To support these programs, the organization hosts many creative fundraisers throughout the year. The one yachtsmen most look forward to is the ShowBoats International Yacht Rendezvous. Held each November, the three-day bash includes themed evening parties, yacht cocktail parties, a live auction and a formal gala. The stars also come out; personalities like Oprah Winfrey, Jim Belushi and Michael Bolton are but a few of the entertainers who have attended. This event is one of the world’s largest charity yachting events, having raised about 20 million dollars since its inception in 1988.

Normally held in Palm Beach, the Rendezvous has moved to Atlantis in Paradise Island, The Bahamas, this year in celebration of its 25th anniversary. The event will be held November 8-10.

Rick Case says it best, “[My wife] Rita and I founded the ShowBoats International Rendezvous twenty-four years ago because Fort Lauderdale is the Venice of America. Many yachtsmen have homes, businesses and ties to Fort Lauderdale. We created this event as a way for yacht owners, sponsors and guests to network and have fun while they raise much-needed funds for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County. Each year, we continue to put the ‘fun’ in fundraising!”



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Freedom Waters seeks owners to offer their yacht for an afternoon to families with children fighting cancer (above and left). Children of the Boys & Girls Clubs serve their culinary creations during the Show-Boats International Rendezvous fundraiser (right).



“This is what modern philanthropists want to see: action, people who can make things happen so that there is a result at the end of activity, not just a commitment.” – OWNER GERALD RONSON

If you can't make it, send your yacht. The organization also is seeking yacht owners to donate charters aboard their vessels during the Rendezvous. The charter fees paid (at 50 percent of the regular rate), will go to help the children. It's also great exposure for charter yachts and all owner expenses—which should be minimal as dockage and half the utilities are being comped by Atlantis—are tax deductible.

Take a Sunday Cruise

John Weller has been a yacht broker for 35 years, but he has had a lifelong commitment to helping those in need. This year will mark the 33rd anniversary of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Fishing Tournament in Fort Lauderdale, an event he founded and is now part of another organization that Weller co-founded five years ago, Freedom Waters Foundation.

Freedom Waters' main focus is to bring some joy to families with children diagnosed with cancer such as leukemia. Working with the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital in Hollywood, Florida, Weller Days gives families a chance to get on the water and relax, providing a distraction from the stress in their lives.

There is no shortage of families in need, but there is a shortage of yacht owners willing to offer their boat for a few hours on Sundays. Owners are welcome to come along for the cruise on the Intracoastal Waterway, usually lasting a few hours. Once the owners have had the experience, Weller notes, they feel they have done something worthwhile with their day and they are enthusiastic about continuing to help out.

Freedom Waters also has specially designed small sailboats that they use to take handicap children out sailing. “Personally, I will

always remember the day I took this little fellow who is blind out sailing. I would put my hand on his and say ‘steer to the right,’ I’d wait awhile then put my hand on his again and say ‘steer to the left.’ He really had a feel for it and had a great time,” says Weller. “What happens is rich guys write checks for charities and they never see exactly what happens with their money. We are not looking for money, we’re looking for good guys. And when you donate the boat and you go out on the boat, you see the faces of these families you can see you’ve made a difference.”

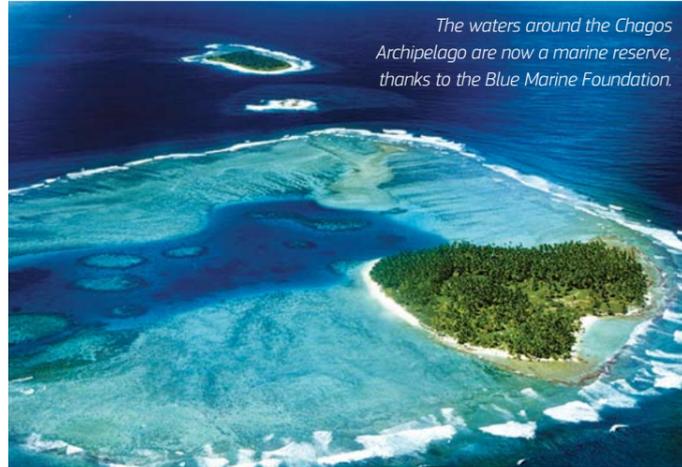
Host a Wounded Warrior Charter

Gary Markel, owner of the 155-foot motor yacht *One More Toy*, had a sudden inspiration one day while channel surfing. He came across a show about dive trips in St. Thomas for injured U.S. service members as a way to heal their minds and bodies.

“It really hit home. I have this boat, and if it isn’t working [on charter], why couldn’t I do that for these guys?” says Markel.

He got in touch with the Care Coalition, which helps wounded Special Operations soldiers and their families through the recovery process to enhance their quality of life, and Operation Cruise was launched.

So far, three yacht charters have been organized for these service members and their partners; two more are planned before the end of 2012. The counselor who works with these groups said they have received great feedback for the program, as the week-long cruises have helped re-connect the soldiers’ relationships and reduce stress. Another yacht has joined Markel’s *One More Toy* to host these charters as well, and, in addition, the organization seeks donations to offset owner’s expenses, such as fuel and



how to help

BLUE Marine Foundation
www.bluemarinefoundation.com
 Tel: +44 (0)20 7845 5850

Boys & Girls Clubs ShowBoats International Yacht Rendezvous
www.yachtrendezvous.com
 Tel: (954) 537-1010

Freedom Waters Foundation
www.freedomwatersfoundation.org
 Tel: (239) 248-1120

Operation Cruise
www.operationcruise.org

SeaKeepers Scientific Vessel of Opportunity Program
www.seakeepers.org
 Tel: (305) 448-7089

YachtAid Global
www.yachtaidglobal.org
 Tel: (619) 630-4626



“We are not looking for money, we’re looking for good guys.”

– BROKER JOHN WELLER

provisions, as well as donations for dockage and excursions. All donations and any owner expenses are tax deductible as Operation Cruise has 501(c)(3) status.

“I’ve never been in the military, but this seemed like a way that I could serve my country by helping those who serve,” says Markel.

Go On a Scientific Expedition

The International SeaKeepers Society’s Scientific Vessel of Opportunity Program unites scientists with privately owned yachts to reduce the burden of continuous budget cuts. Yachts provide the platform for expeditions that run the gamut from medical research to sea data collection, providing valuable information to world leaders responsible for establishing ocean preservation policies.

Yacht owners who are willing to donate time, fuel, provisions and crew have an exceptional opportunity to engage with scientists on research missions. SeaKeepers is developing a global database of yachts willing to participate. A yacht’s capacities, preferences, limitations and cruising schedules are noted to match specific research projects.

The motor yacht *Miss Phoebe II*, owned by avid philanthropist Jim Jacoby, was the first vessel to participate. Her captain, Carl Hampp, and first mate took the first expedition to the Dry Tortugas, the islands beyond Key West, in May 2012. The second expedition with Jacoby aboard landed the vessel at Tiger Beach in The Bahamas. “It’s amazing to see these scientists trying to solve the problems and to actually be a part of it,” says Hampp.

Owners of participating yachts may qualify for tax benefits, and if they decide to become a member of the International SeaKeepers Society, expedition costs can be deducted from the membership fee.

“Many vessels sit unused for extended periods of time between charters or owner trips—this may be the perfect opportunity to donate the vessel to science,” encourages Hampp.

Join a Yacht Club With a Cause

“It’s solvable!” must be the most enticing preface to the exposition of any problem. It’s a remark that George Duffield, co-founder of the Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE), can make when he describes the foundation’s work to tackle the global problem of overfishing. And he believes this is part of the reason the charity has managed to land a dream catch of high-profile supporters in the yachting

sphere. Luminaries including Princess Zahra, daughter of HH The Aga Khan, Ernesto Bertarelli, Sir Charles Dunstone, Mark Lloyd and Gerald Ronson are supporting the launch of The Blue Marine Yacht Club at the 2012 Monaco Yacht Show.

If commercial fishing boats continue to vacuum up fish at the rate they do now, we are likely to run out of the varieties we eat now by the middle of this century. With ecosystems smashed, the world’s oceans will become a murky soup of plankton, worms, jellyfish and mud. As Duffield notes, “This is not just to do with the welfare of marine life, this is a human food security issue.” For a billion of the world’s poor, who rely on fish for protein, it will mean starvation. Many on yachts have already witnessed the problem firsthand. Those yachting in the Med this summer may have noticed swarms of jellyfish, a result of overfishing.

Fishing quotas, which are based on politics and poorly enforced, have failed to stop overfishing. In contrast, BLUE’s simple, bold method works: The organization works with governments and NGOs to establish marine reserves, then regular patrols ensure they are protected in practice as well as on paper. When founded in 2010, the foundation aimed to increase the area of ocean protected by marine reserves from one to 10 percent over the next 10 years; already it’s reached three percent.

BLUE’s achievements in its short life have been astounding. It secured a donor to ensure that the then-largest marine reserve in the world—247,000 square miles around the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean—would be created, and the foundation currently has a Central American reserve in the pipeline and much more planned in the U.K. and its overseas areas of influence. “They connect to the individuals and organizations able to make a difference,” says Ronson. “This is what modern philanthropists want to see: action, people who can make things happen so that there is a result at the end of activity, not just a commitment.”

Yacht owners are a key part of the success. The Blue Marine Yacht Club, a virtual yacht club, will cement their role. Members can support BLUE in various ways, including donating a voluntary levy on yacht charters, berthing or yacht club membership fees. The BLUE burgee will carry between one and three stars depending upon the owner’s level of support.

“I hope the ensign acts as a conversation starter,” says Dunstone, “and provides a real opportunity to engage my fellow yacht owners and their guests around these very important issues.” ■

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AS SEEN IN



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