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Disabled take helm for raceCrew, captains enjoy regatta

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PORTSMOUTH -- It's just plain fun.

Those were the only words Dianne McCormick Seagren needed to describe Sunday's 15th annual Challenger's Cup Regatta.

The regatta is organized by members of Community Developmental Services, and allows individuals with disabilities to participate as crew members in either a powerboat or sailboat race. This year's regatta included more than 30 local boat owners and 90 individuals with disabilities.

Seagren has offered the services of her sailboat Grainne the past seven years, and said she has had a blast every time.

"It's great when everyone can get a chance to drive the boat," Seagren said. "We have a great time and just make sure we're back in time for the food."

Before leaving the harbor, each boat captain predicts the time it will take his or her crew to finish sailing the course. The team that comes closest to matching that estimated time wins.

Joyce Elliot, who has participated in the regatta in the past, was sailing as a member of the Grainne crew this year.

"It's hard to get on and off the boat, but I had a good time," Elliot said. "I got a chance to drive it."

Keith Bridge, a member of the Portsmouth Yacht Club, has been sailing his boat Merrywing in the event for the past five years.

"It's so nice to bring a smile to their faces," Bridge said.

According to Community Developmental Services Director Bob James, the event is one of the highlights of the year.

"This is what it's all about," James said, "the community coming together to support the people we serve by actively participating and donating their time to join our consumers in this great event."

CDS is an organization dedicated to assisting people with developmental disabilities and

acquired brain disorders live as valued members in their communities. The organization was formed in 1983, and is a private, nonprofit agency.

Jessica Pelletier, participating in her third Challenger's Cup Regatta, was a crew member on the sailboat Mischief.

"My favorite part is having fun," Pelletier said.

For more information on the Challenger's Cup Regatta or CDS, call 436-6111 or visit www.cdsregion8.org.

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