

Margaret Podlich nomination for Distinguished Service Award

The recipient of the 2016 Sailing Industry Distinguished Service award started sailing at three weeks old, sailed with her family as a child, started racing Lasers at 14, and—you can't make this stuff up—used to do the 120-mile Down the Bay Race from Annapolis to Hampton on a J/24 with her family! (You can't do something that nutty and NOT have a sense of humor). She's now a Masters Laser sailor and a good one, although you'll not get her to admit that.

She's also married to a sailor and is a parent to two teenaged (one now 20-ish?) sailors, so knows a little something about parenting yet letting her kids be safe and free enough to take the dinghy to work as sailing instructors. Her best advice to them says a lot about her no-nonsense approach to life: "Don't be dumb."

Now, I'm sure that she now knows she's the recipient, so let me invite Margaret Podlich up here, so I can tell you the rest of the story, and why she is being honored this evening: For the past five years, ended last Friday, Margaret has been the president of the Boat Owners Association of the U.S. (BoatUS). Let's stop right here... would *you* want that job? It's a challenging one and one which she handled with authority, diplomacy, humor, and grace.

She began her career doing grassroots volunteer coordination for four years at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, She then moved over to the Ocean Conservancy (then the Center for Marine Conservation), where her work at the national level taught her about serious conservation issues such as massive garbage dumping. The Clean Water Trust (later absorbed by the BoatU.S. Foundation) recruited her in 1994 to launch a clean boating program. In 2005, she was promoted to the position of vice president government affairs, and in 2011, Podlich became president of BoatU.S.

A 2014 honoree of the Darlene Briggs Marine Industry Woman of the Year award, Podlich worked to promote boating safety initiatives and participated on the prestigious US Coast Guard National Boating Safety Advisory Committee.

As BoatUS Vice President of Government Affairs, Margaret supported realistic, boating-friendly policies and helped successfully pass the 2008 Federal Clean Boating Act that freed boaters from a new state operating permit. Podlich is also credited in leading BoatUS to work with the recreational boating industry and working on policy and programs mutually beneficial to boat owners, manufacturers and service providers, such as combatting the spread of ethanol fuels and saving the GPS system.

In 2012 she was bestowed the NASBLA Award by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, their highest recognition, for notable contributions to the betterment of boating.

Upon her departure from BoatUS, CEO Kirk La said “She made boating better by making government more accountable to boat owners, ensuring that their voice was heard when unfair legislation was being debated. She’s been a strong environmental advocate and played a big role in successfully growing BoatUS into the more than half-a-million-member association that we are today.”

SpinSheet editor Molly Winans says this of Margaret: “She’s probably done more to advocate for boaters in our country than anyone you know—but doesn’t take herself too seriously. Let’s just say that with her calm demeanor and sailing experience, I’d have no hesitation sailing with her in a storm.”