



Girl Power

Increased accessibility and new technologies are smashing the gender barriers in recreational boating and fishing.

By Julie Craven Wagner

Photography as noted



All too often, the anticipation of a great day spent on the water results in a less than perfect day for each member of the family—namely the women on the crew. While it is not a universal truth, the reality is that for many women, recreational boating involves taking a back seat to their male counterparts. All of that is about to change.

Like so many innovations and advancements in the modern world, the opportunities for all-inclusive enjoyment are about to clear the decks. The visionaries at Volvo Penta have developed some new technology and propulsion systems for recreational power boats that provide the confidence and capabilities for the entire family to enjoy everything the world of boating has to offer. Last September, representatives



of the company, which is part of the Swedish-based Volvo Group, reached out to a small group of local female influencers and offered a two-day excursion in the waters off Chatham and Harwich, to experience their new joystick driving feature installed on two center console boat models developed with partners Southport Boats and SOLACE Boats. The two days were not only delightful, but also empowering for the group of women to experience and successfully accomplish the state-of-the-art drive systems that take the anxiety and trepidation out of being at the helm.

In addition to the barrier to enjoyment women often encounter when boating in situations where they don't feel entirely in control, the group was also introduced to the opportunities and awareness of women and the world of recreational fishing. Representing fisherwomen everywhere was Rachel Piacenza, director of marketing for the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF), a Washington, D.C. based nonprofit tasked with advancing the world of recreational fishing for the whole family. "I have fished my entire life," Piacenza explains. "I definitely have



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been in the minority when it comes to women fishing, but that has never stopped me. Most of my recreational vacations are focused on the pursuit of catching fish. Fresh, saltwater, streams, rivers, lakes, oceans; you name it, I'll fish it." Clearly, she has also landed the right career as her presentation on the first night of the adventure focused on an in-depth understanding of the missed economics and opportunities the fishing industry was leaving on the table by not engaging with women.

It is estimated that one billion dollars could be realized by the sportfishing industry if we

increase women's participation by only 10%. In addition, data supports that household females do 54% of the activity planning, and not surprisingly 70-80% of all consumer spending decisions are driven by women, making the argument for brands to shift their focus and speak to women. Those are statistics that could significantly impact the not only the sport fishing industry as a whole but have a real impact to fishing destinations like the Cape and the Islands. RBFF's Women Making Waves initiative strives to change all that by sharing the joys of fishing and boating, believing the water is open to everyone!



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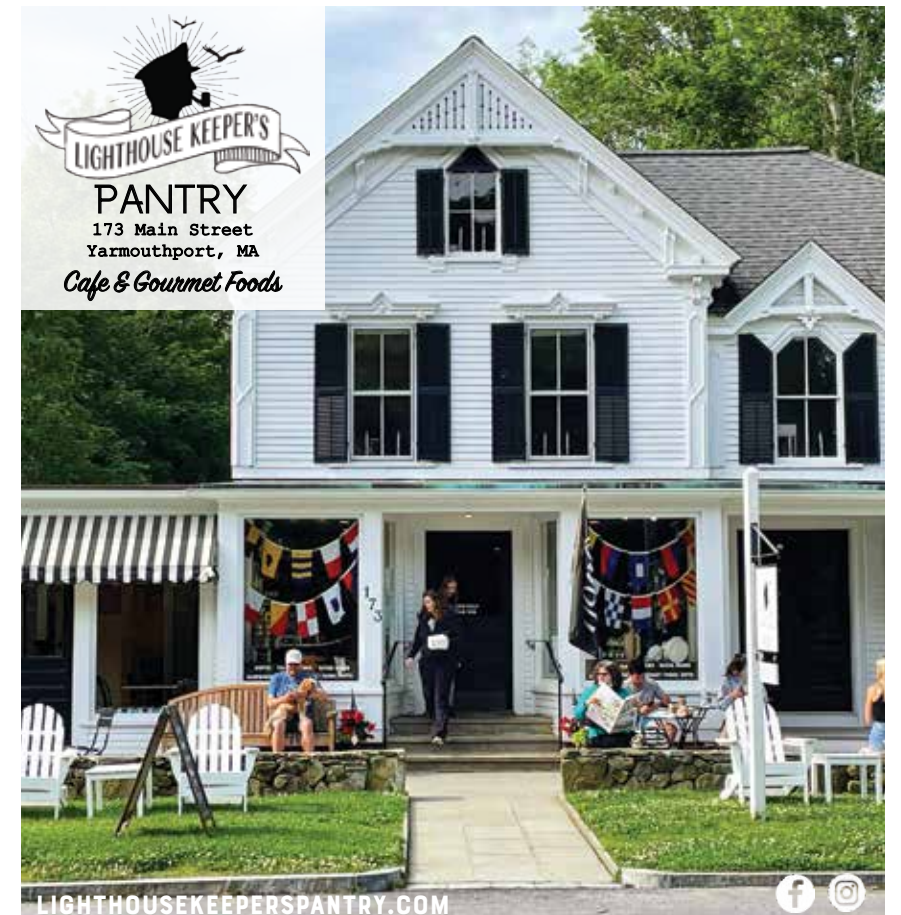
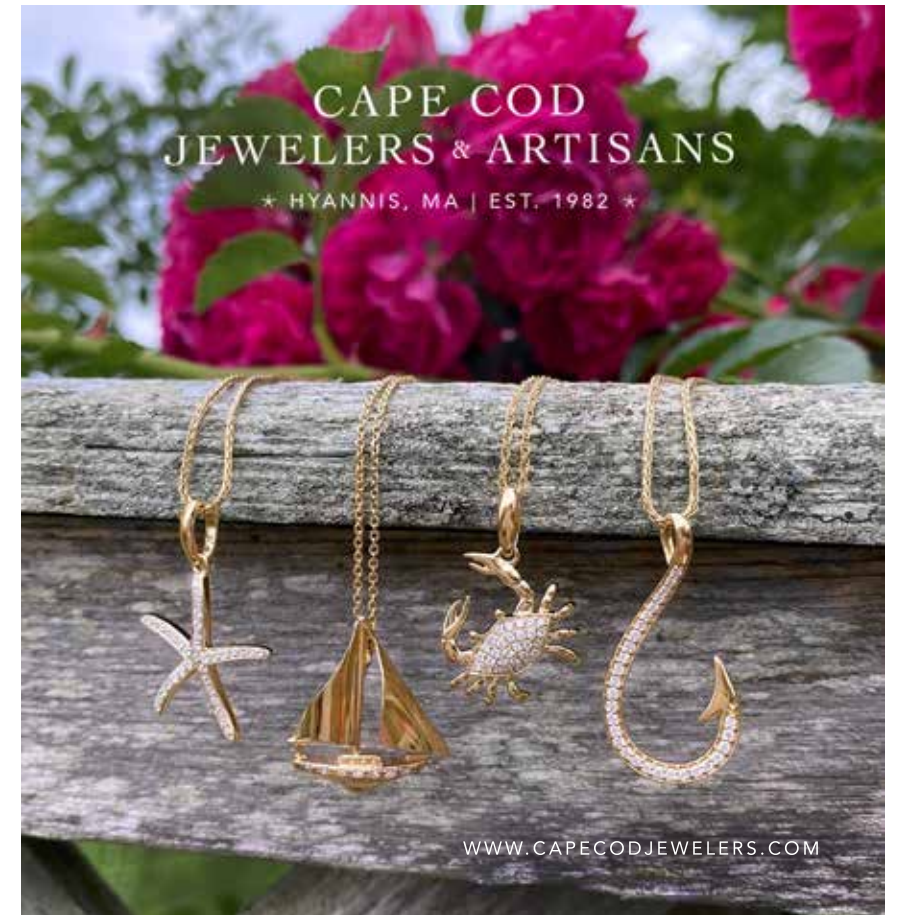
The Volvo Penta power solutions in the Southport and Solace boats offer several key elements to bridge those barriers. First in the Solace, the 415CS center console set-up is a perfect style of boat for easy accessibility for everyone on board. The fully integrated Volvo Penta DPI Aquamatic propulsion system with twin diesel inboards provides an open transom

allowing for plenty of safe recreation for the whole family. This innovative boat opens the way for more unobstructed on-deck activities, such as dining, fishing, swimming, lounging, diving and enjoying the flexibility inherent in this unique boat. In addition to the open stern that incorporates a wealth of family and fishing features never-

before-seen in a center console, it also includes plenty of other features that will appeal to women, men and really the entire family; features like a carbon-fiber superstructure, the one-piece dive door with integrated stairs, new versatile aft seating arrangements on deck, built-in air conditioning and a cabin with enclosed shower and head. This

boat redefines the concept of a quality no-compromise center console boat for the modern boating family.

The Southport 30 FE center console also features the Volvo Penta DPI inboards, but the smaller scale is the perfect size to begin your adventure. Both models feature a joystick at the helm that allows the



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captain to shift, steer and accelerate all with one hand, which most women quickly take to mastering, and can't help but incorporate a pun into the delight of using the system; usually something to the effect of, "This really is a joy to use!" The easy joystick docking is simply engaged by pressing the Docking button on the base of the joystick control, and the boat's maneuvering features—steering, gear control, bow thruster, throttle—are controlled easily with just one hand. This feature holds the boat's speed and heading at the press of a button. The boat's steering is then controlled easily and conveniently through the fingertip control of the joystick. "It's more fun and relaxing to use our joystick control, and it gives boaters more confidence on board," notes Jens Bering, Vice President of Marine Sales, Volvo Penta North America. Along with Arjen Steegstra, a local fishing legend, all the women on board walked away with newly mastered skills that offer a new future in boating for them and their families.

Kate Bowler, a social media influencer from Scituate, under the handle of @domestikateblog was on the trip, and her beaming smile barely left her face as we surfed the waves off Monomoy with striped bass breaking off our stern. As a woman, a mom of a young daughter, and a resident of a coastal New England town, Bowler says she felt really lucky to learn about the teams that work and advocate for more female representation in boating and fishing. "It was empowering to learn not only that I was capable of taking on these really fun pastimes myself, but there would be more opportunities and accessibility in these outdoor water sports for my daughter in the future thanks to their programing and innovations."

And in case anyone was wondering, plenty of fish were caught and all were released to live another day, and maybe get another kiss from a woman at the helm. 🇺🇸
Julie Craven Wagner is the editor of Cape Cod LIFE.

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