through direct experience, and to create a sense of community—to welcome everyone, to give people of all ages and abilities a place to come to whether to learn to sail, to carve, or to build a boat; or just to find a place where they are welcome."

I volunteer to help with the Arts and Crafts area at the upcoming Open House. Arriving at the Center House, my assignment is to help children with scrimshawing. Scrimshawing began on whaling ships in the 1700s as a way to pass the time, and developed into an art. Sailors carved their designs into whale teeth and bones then filled the cuts with soot. Using pieces of tree bark, we draw our designs of ships and trees with felt pens. Other art stations teach how to make curled wood ornaments, small wooden boats, knots and origami.

My next volunteer job with CWB is Saturday morning envelope stuffing. With an obvious lack of coffee, five groggy adults work in silence. Wondering what brought everyone here, I start a conversation with the man opposite me. "Volunteering earns us sailing time," he explains. Another lady adds "I love the water. I want to learn to sail." As we stuff envelopes, our discussion moves to life, politics, marriage and Seattle itself, turning what had started as a boring job into a group of people enjoying their time together.

Outside, later on, Saaduus the Master Carver and Artist-in-Residence sits down to chat. "On Saturdays I carve on the canoe with whoever comes to help me. I tell people they can have no anger when they are here. The tree will feel this. I send these people away to clear their heads. Our people believe the canoe spirit will take care of us and we must always take care of it, to honor the tree."

As I look back over my local volunteer experiences, I realize that there are many heroes working to protect Puget Sound waterways, and I have a wide range of volunteer opportunities to choose from. By dropping in or by making a bigger commitment, I can gain a sense of community and do something useful. It's time now for me to do my part for Puget Sound, to give back as a volunteer, to learn and to have some fun.


THE TOLIVA SHOAL RACE By Lisa Mighetto

Something Special is dwarfed by a magnificent Mt. Rainier while competing in the Toliva Shoal Race, in the South Sound.

When it comes to sailing, I am a cruiser, not a racer. My idea of a good time is sitting in my cockpit at anchor, preferably with a good book. But I jumped at the chance to serve on the committee boat for this year's Toliva Shoal Race, the South Sound's largest competitive sailing event. I had heard about this race for years, and pictured gale-force winds in the dark of February, with crews limping back to Olympia the next morning. It was not my kind of boating at all, and I was curious about its appeal.

I discovered a broader event than I had imagined, with more than 50 volunteers organizing events from group meals to the after-race party. "It's a good way to meet people," says Don Waterhouse, who has served as race committee chair for three years. "I have a blast."

The volunteers on the chase boats included two foreign exchange students, neither of whom had been on a boat before. Both hoped for new experiences and a chance to practice their English—which prompted speculation about the words they might bring back to the dock.

It was a family affair on the committee boat, as Eric Bishop, in charge of the race on the water, had brought his wife and son. Recording the boats at the starting line taught me that this was a group effort. One person, straining to read sail numbers and boat names through binoculars, would call out "Gobbledegook has arrived," while another would consult the list of entries and ask, "could that be Gardy lou?"

An automatic timer called the Ollie Wallock Race Start Machine signals when to display the flags for different classes. As Eric explains, its precision "takes the fear out of volunteering" on the committee boat. But we employed low-tech devices as well, monitoring the wind from our Tollycraft by watching a stream of toilet paper tied to the bow pulpit.

Toliva Shoal is sometimes an 18-hour race, and Gary Larson, captain of the committee boat, had warned me that its crew "sometimes sees the sun come up the next morning." But I was never bored and did not even open the novel I had brought. During my 13 hours on board, I learned that Gary had worked as a shipwright for most of his life, and now builds one wooden vessel each year. I learned that the boat Baru was named for an ancient Irish king. I learned to play gin, and heard a song about drinking beer on Sunday morning, as another crewmember entertained us with guitar picking. After dark, as we waited for the last boat, ironically named Outatime, to cross the finish line, I resolved to join this community of boaters again in 2009—and next time I will leave my book at the dock.

Lisa Mighetto is a member of the South Sound Sailing Society and Olympia Yacht Club, co-sponsors of the Toliva Shoal Race.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.foottloosesailing.org
www.parks.wa.gov
www.pugetsound.org
www.cwb.org

A complete list of maritime heritage organizations in the Pacific Northwest that recruit volunteers can be found at www.maritime-heritage.net/organizations/volunteer_list.asp.