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TWENTY NEW YORK AREA WOMEN SAILED TO CUBA DELIVERING A MESSAGE OF FRIENDSHIP AND PEACE TO THE PEOPLE OF CUBA

New York, NY, November 22, 2016 – Twenty women from the New York City tri-state area who captained and crewed a flotilla to Cuba have returned from the extraordinary journey. The diverse group, some who had never sailed long distances before, believe they contributed to the growing friendship between the people of Cuba and the US and built the beginning of a solid relationship between their sailing communities.

The flotilla, organized by New York City-based sailing club *Sailors NYC*, comprised of three sailboats and departed from Key West, Florida to Cuba. The vessels sailed three legs of 95 nautical miles each from Key West to Varadero, Cuba (about 60 land miles east of Havana) from Varadero to Marina Hemingway and then back to Key West on Saturday, November 12.

The sailors attended a dinner party that was held at the *Hemingway International Yacht Club of Cuba*, hosted by Commodore José Miguel Díaz Escrich. *Sailors NYC* and *HIYC* exchanged burgees -- club flags -- and an appreciation award was presented by *Sailors NYC* to the *HIYC* club members. The two clubs signed a friendship agreement stating their reciprocal commitment to work together to strengthen the friendly and collaborative relations between both institutions and to carry out actions that will cultivate collaboration between the nautical communities of Cuba and United States.

During their stay in Cuba the women had the opportunity to have personal encounters with locals who were very welcoming and hospitable.

Heather Peet, one of the participants, was highly impressed with the high level of English proficiency of the Cubans. “They had many questions and were very curious about our lives in America, our hobbies, families and which

candidate we supported in the elections. A few even invited us over to their homes for a traditional lunch which was probably one of the highlights of the trip for me.”

The women initiated a donation drive for the Cubans who were affected by Hurricane Matthew in October. Donations included over-the-counter medicine, clothing and office supplies, and were delivered with the assistance of the Beth Shalom Temple of Havana to eastern Cuba. Other donations were delivered by the women themselves to local schools and families they met during their tours.

Captain Nitzan Levy, founder of *Sailors NYC* and an intrepid sailor herself, organized the flotilla. “As soon as the sea gates to Cuba opened, I knew I must sail there. It was an extremely empowering experience for me and all the women. The Cubans were very surprised to meet so many women sailors and, according to them, our story made it to the Cuban news!”

The Cuba flotilla was *Sailors NYC*'s fourth flotilla to the Caribbean. “People who sign up for our sailing flotillas are sailors and non-sailors who share the passion for exploring destinations in a unique way. People of different ages, backgrounds and cultures come together and meet people who become their friends for years after. Flotillas create a special bond,” said Captain Levy.

Sailors NYC will hold a second flotilla to Cuba this spring on March 30. Other flotillas in 2017 include the British Virgin Islands on February 18 and Martinique and St. Lucia on February 26.

Sailors NYC is a sailing club and school offering sailors in the New York metropolitan area an unparalleled opportunity to enjoy unlimited access to recreational sailing on medium size vessels (25'+) without the cost, upkeep and crew associated with owning a boat. The club, which operates from Pier 25 in TriBeCa and Liberty Harbor Marina in Jersey City, offers sailors of all levels the opportunity to improve their skills and enjoy the camaraderie of other sailors. *Sailors NYC* hosts sailing vacations in spectacular settings

throughout the world, classes and other social events year-round. For more information, visit www.sailorsnyc.com.

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